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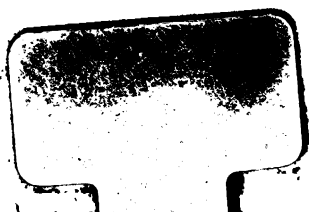
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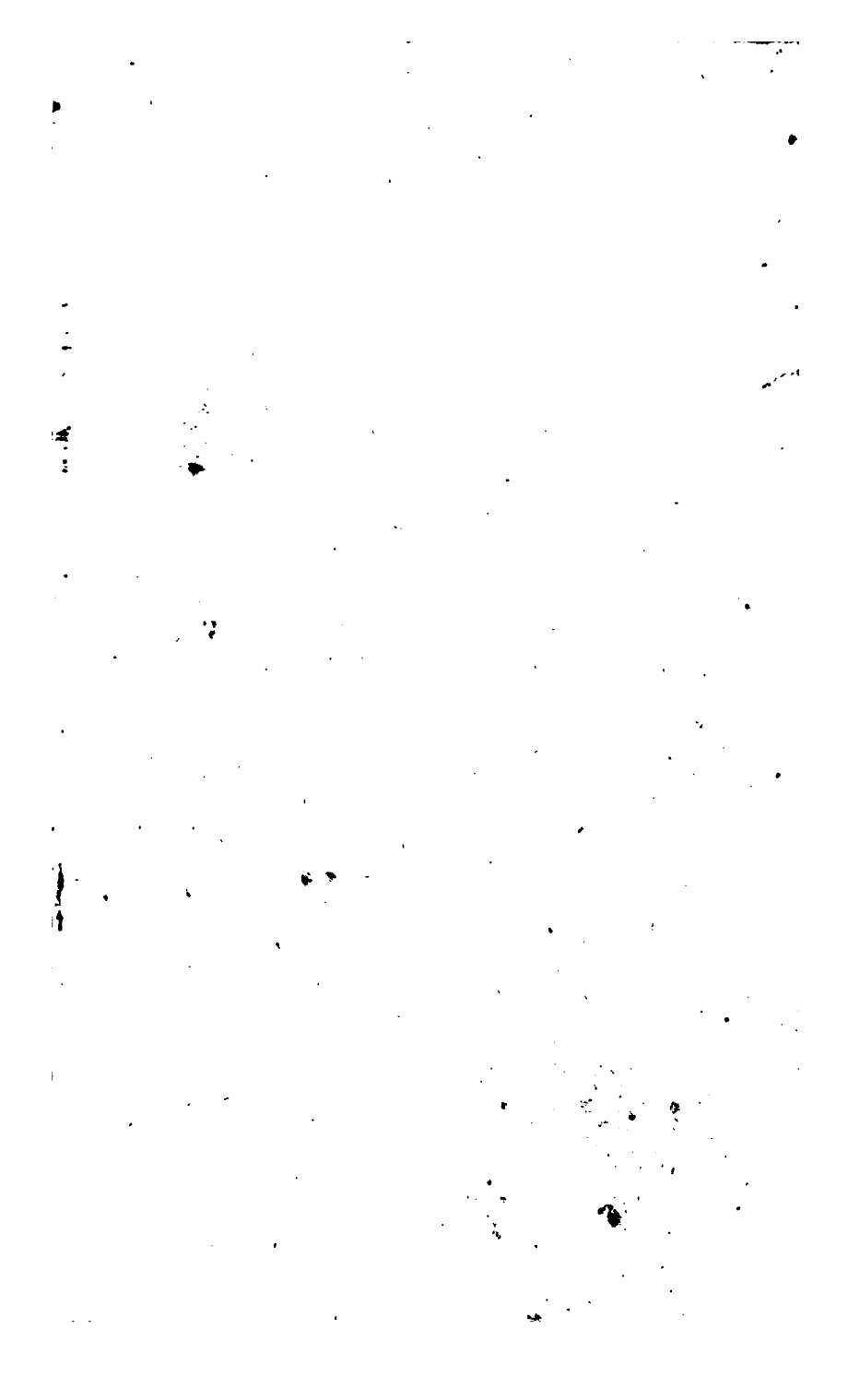
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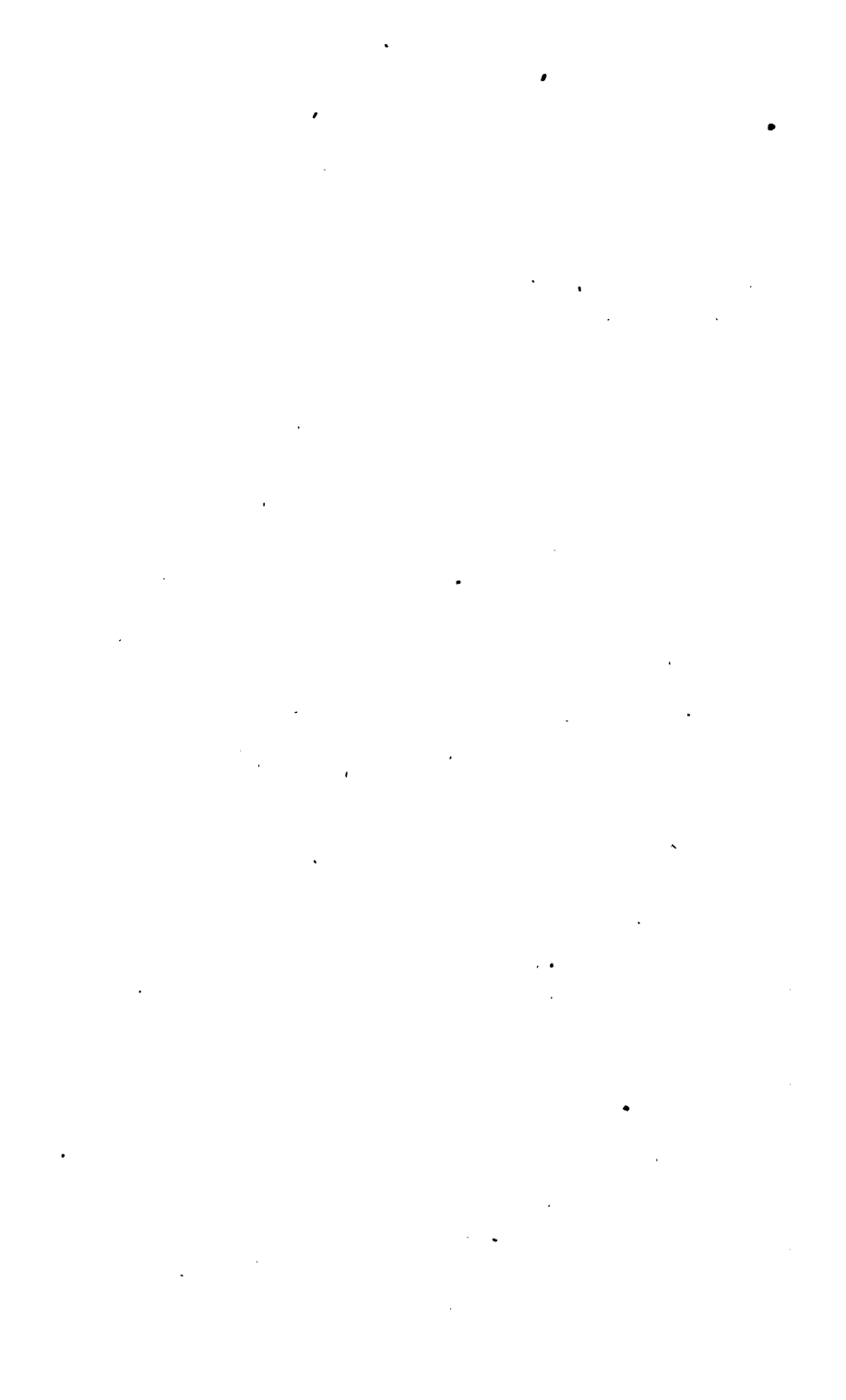


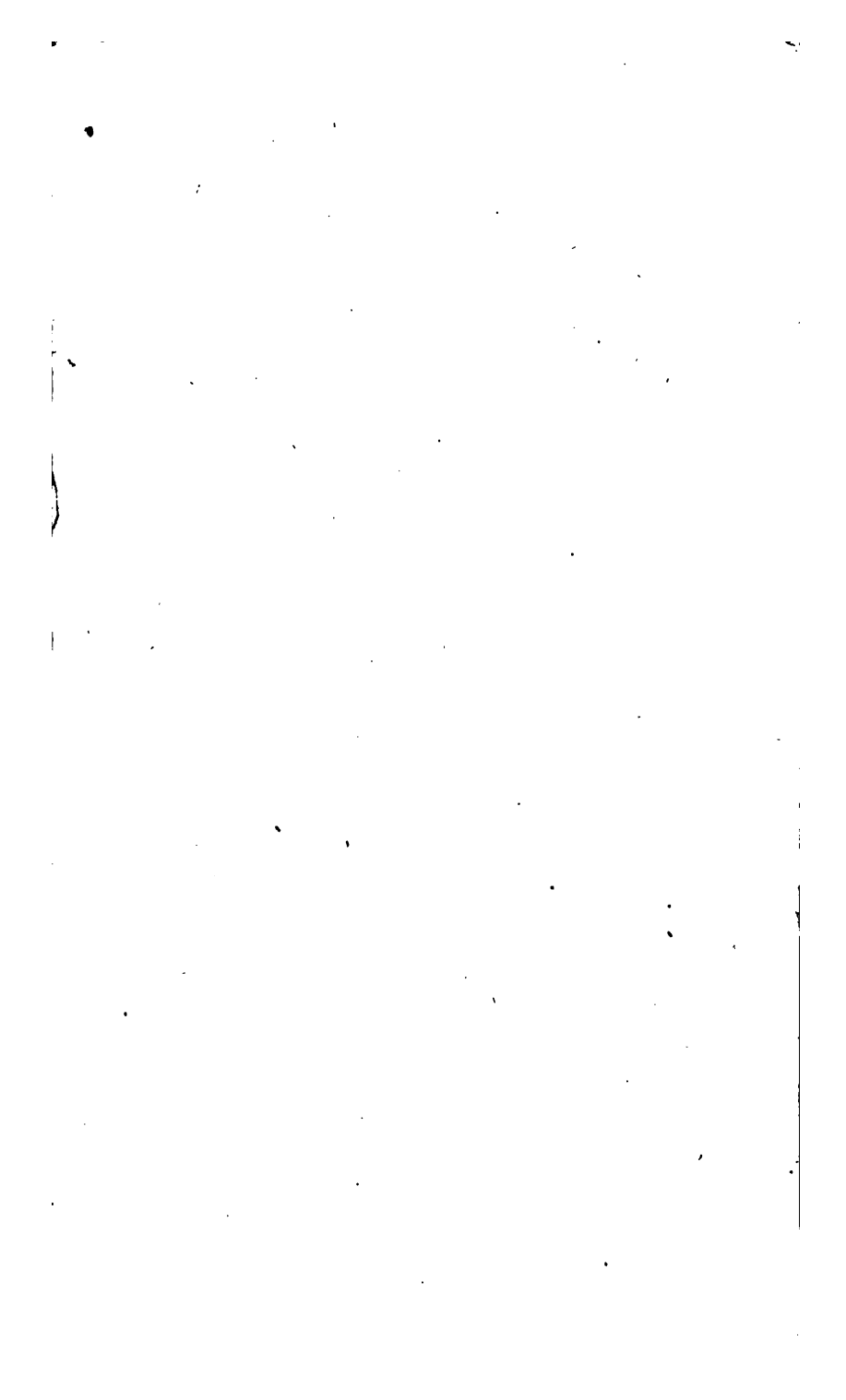
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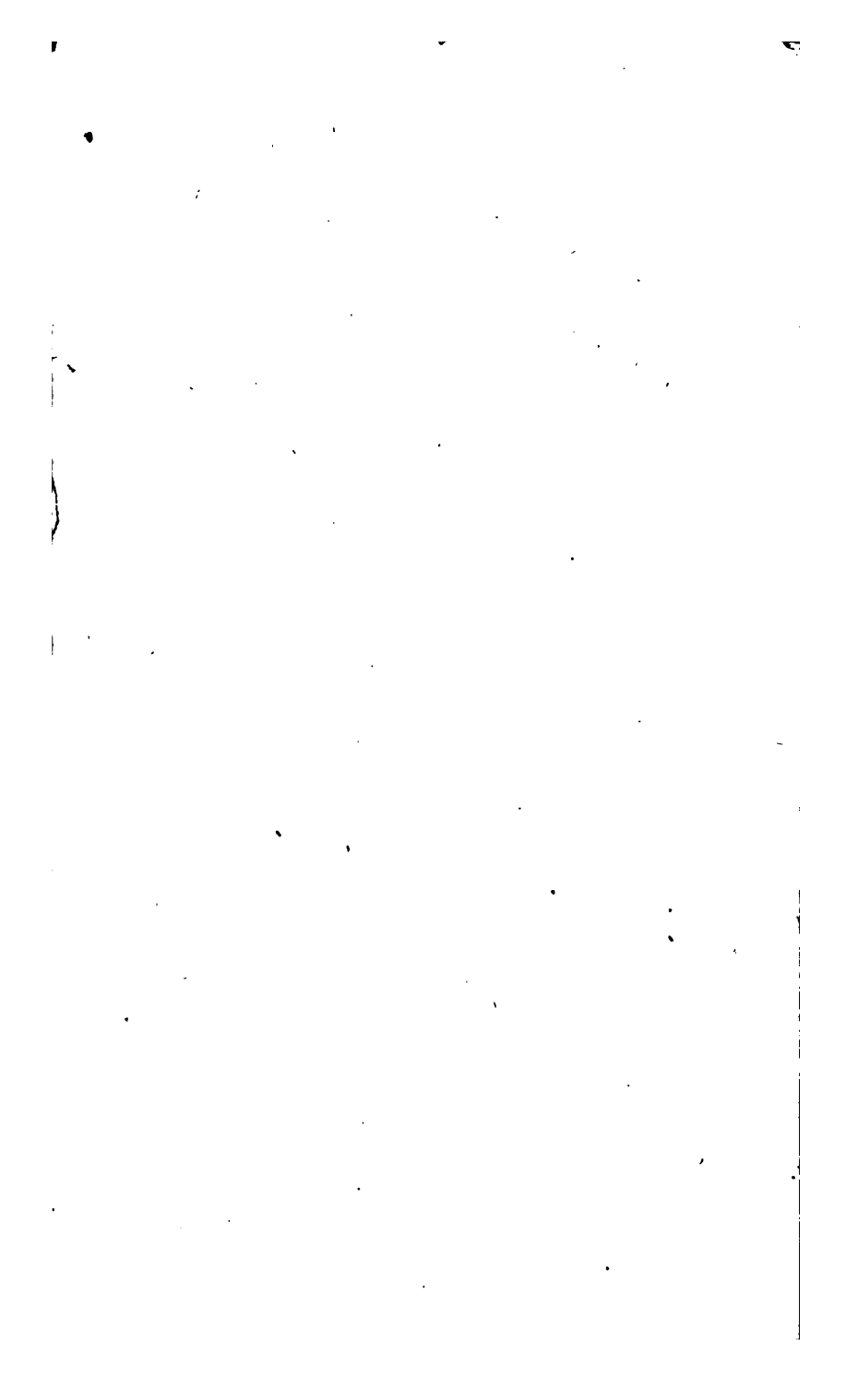








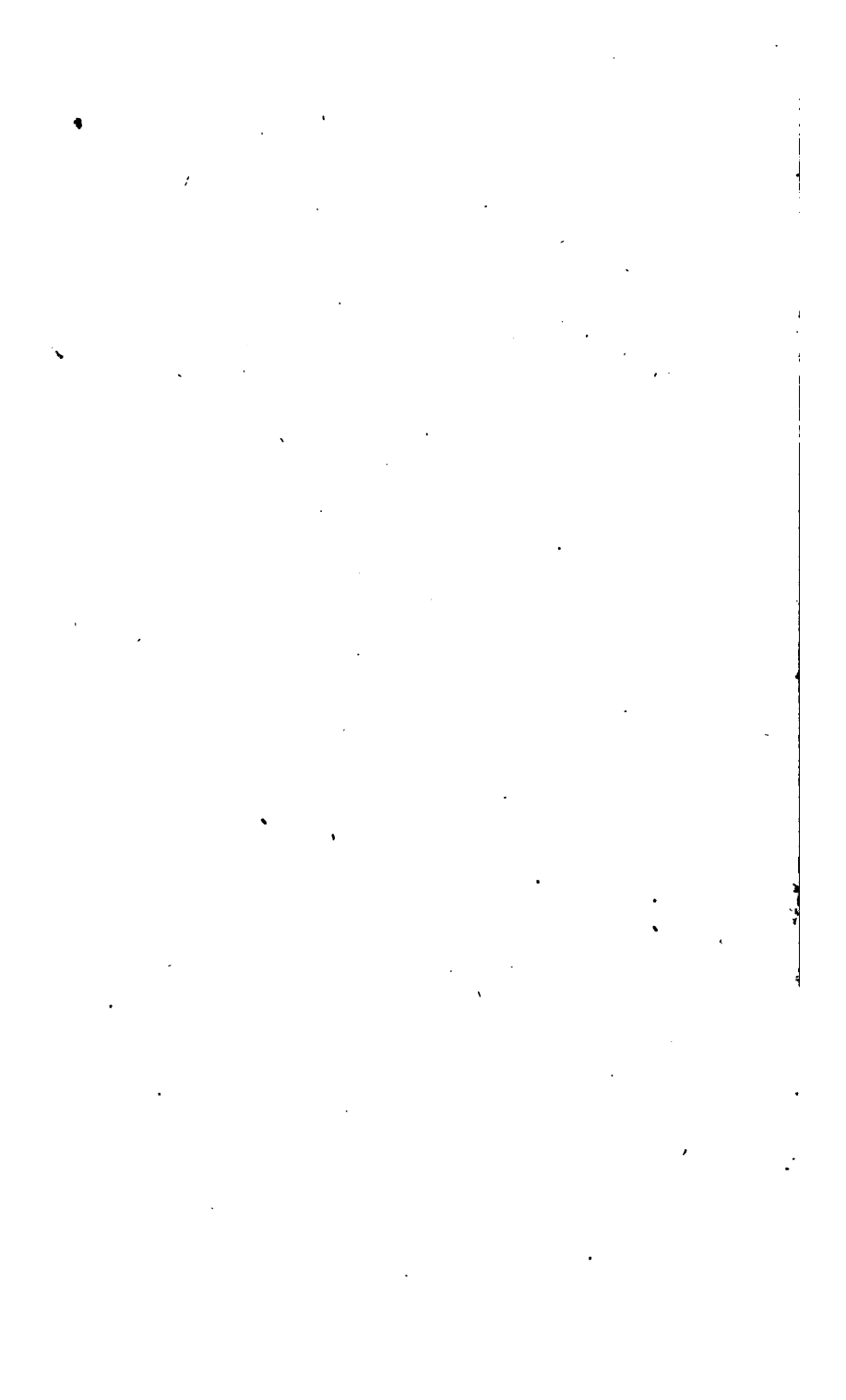


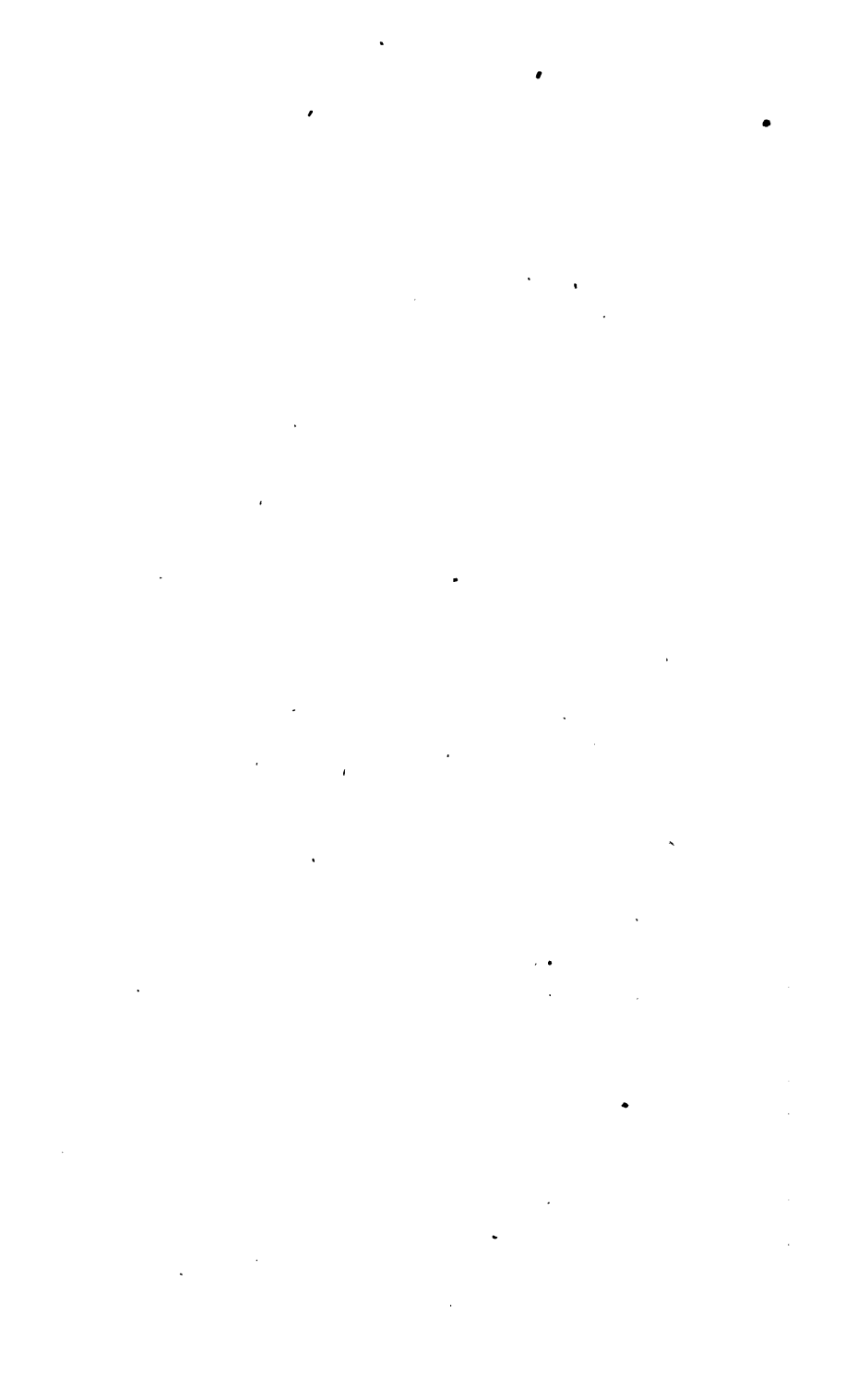


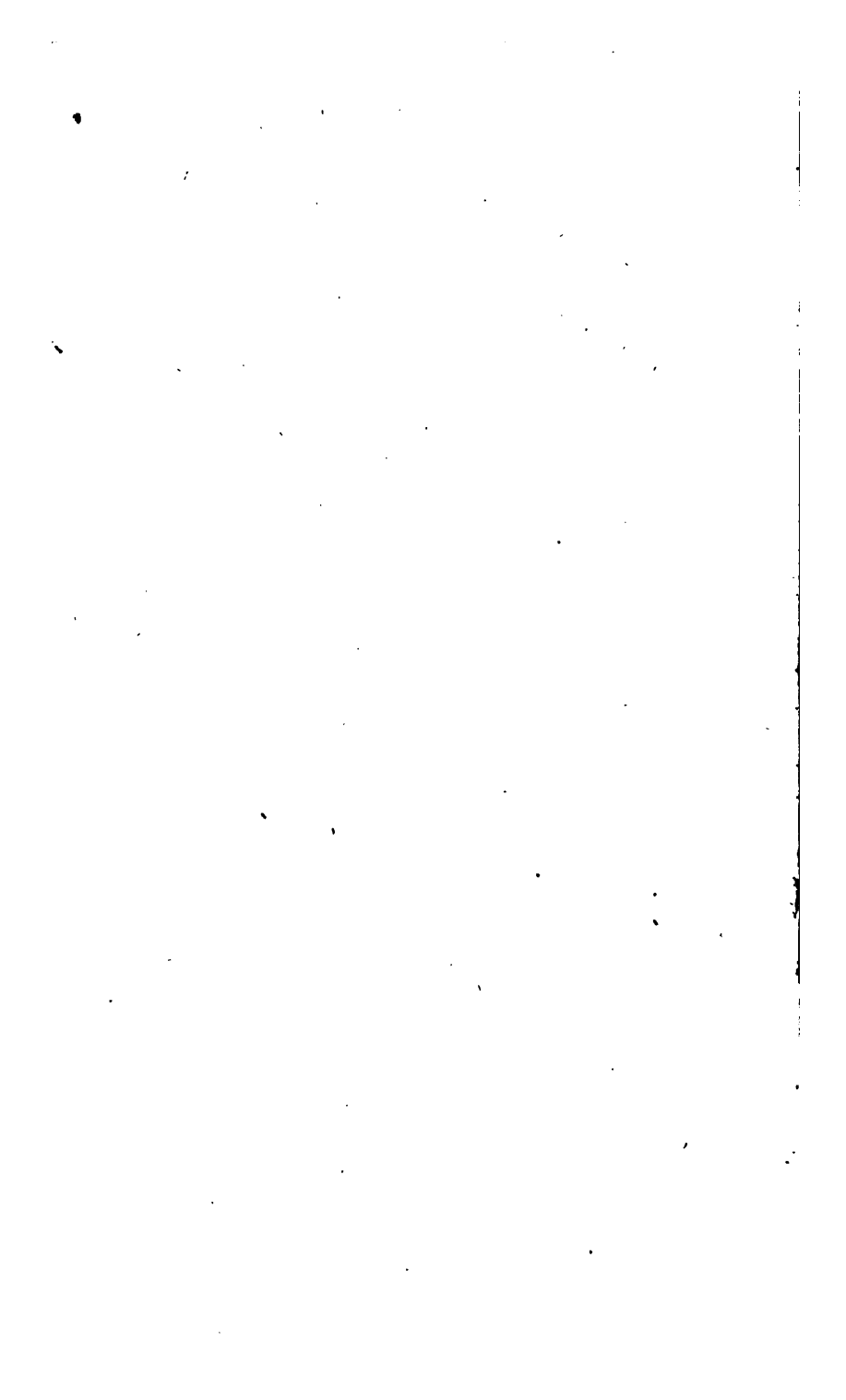








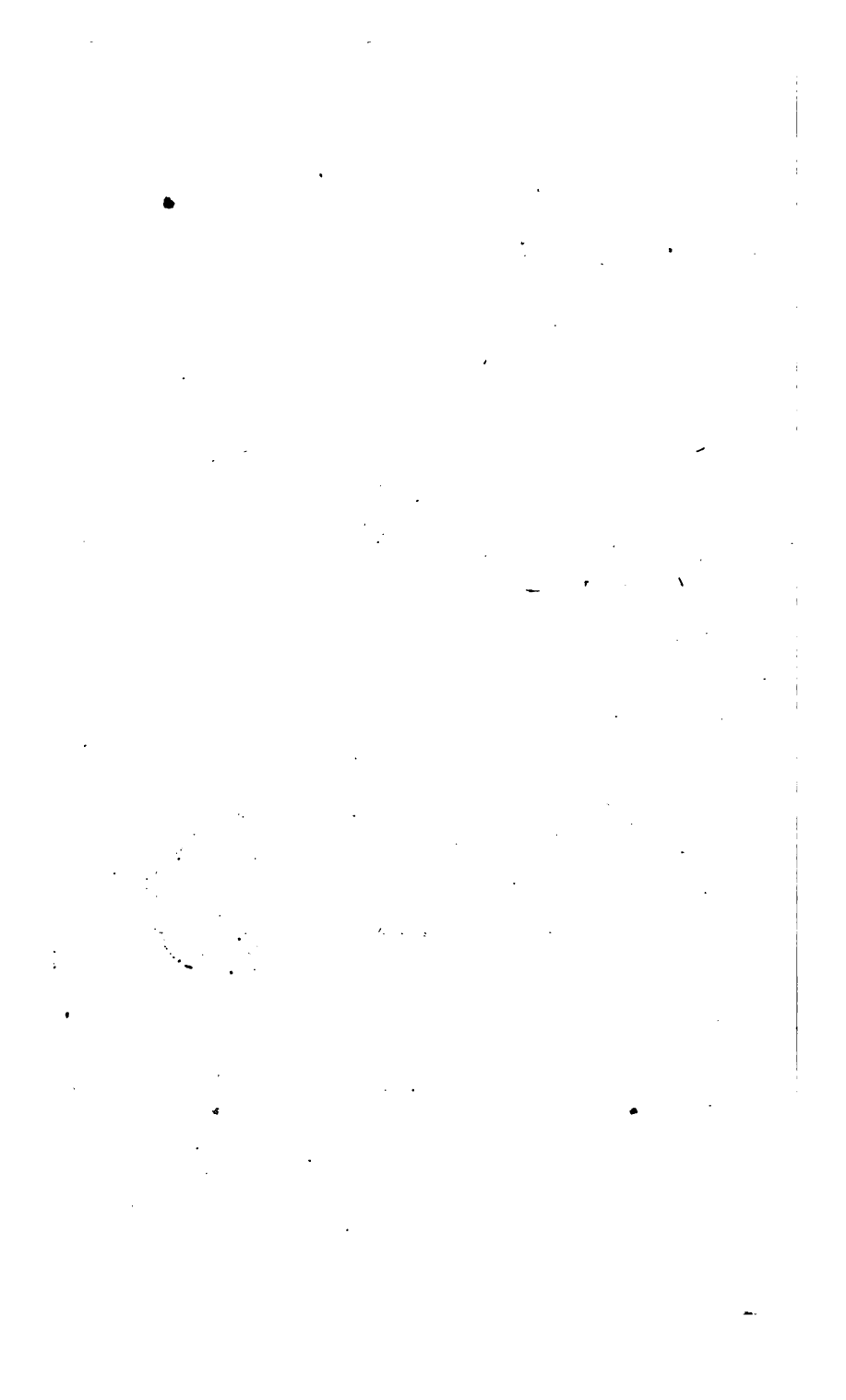








THE
MYSTERIES OF THE FOREST.



THE
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A Romance.

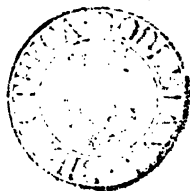
IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS MARY HOUGHTON,
AUTHOR OF THE BORDER CHIEFTAINS, &c.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. II.



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THE
MYSTERIES
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THE FOREST.

CHAPTER VII.

'Twas happiness too exquisite to last,
Of joys departed never to return,
How painful the remembrance!

BLAIR.

VALORIA'S life now passed in a course of uninterrupted tranquillity, and though it presented but few variations, she never felt any sensation of *ennui* or listlessness, from both of which she was preserved, by constant and regular employment. Her mornings were uniformly dedicated to her pencil; and her evenings, when it

was fine, were spent in rambling among the romantic scenery, with which she was surrounded. Her lute was her only companion in these walks; and often, seated under the shelter of a projecting cliff, overhung by stately larches, she awoke the echoes with her lays, and any one who had seen her elegant figure, arrayed in a robe of simplest white, and her fair brows bound with a wreath of living myrtle, might have fancied her some woodland nymph who presided over the place.

Often, too, did Valoria visit the neighbouring hamlets, and by her benevolence, chase want and sorrow from the breast of their inhabitants, whose gratitude was more strongly excited by her sweetness and condescension, than by the bounty she distributed to them. Her leisure hours were frequently employed in making clothes for the poorest of her pensioners, in which she made Rosella assist her, to

the great delight of the little girl: she sometimes sent her to the cottages of those who were sick, with medicine and cordials, prepared by her own hands; for the Contessa d'Albano, had not considered the knowledge of such things beneath her dignity; and Valoria's greatest pride and pleasure was to follow, as near as possible, the example of one so revered and loved; and the manner in which she performed these acts of benevolence was so simple, so void of all vanity and ostentation, that it could not fail of finding a way to every heart.

Six weeks had our heroine passed in her new abode, during which time her health was completely re-established; and from regular hours, constant exercise, and tranquillity of mind, her beauty appeared more glowing than ever; cheerfulness beamed in her radiant eyes, the bloom of the fresh-blown peach mantled in her

pure cheek, and its deepest crimson tinged her lip, round which hovered the smile of innocence and content.

It was in one of the most delicious evenings the summer had afforded, that Valoria went out for her usual walk; and instead of rambling along the sea-shore, she took a road which led among the rocks, and was shaded from the sun by the larches and other mountain trees that grew out of their sides. Our heroine strolled along, amusing herself by gathering the curious mosses, and other alpine plants, with which the way abounded; when a break in the rocks suddenly presented a winding path, which, never having explored before, she determined to pursue to its termination. The wildness of this spot seemed in some measure varied by the hand of art. Every tree that would flourish in an alpine solitude was thickly scattered around, and the

masses of stone were covered with clusters of the arbutus oleander and rock lilies, which sprung out of their crevices.

On reaching the bottom of the glen, Valoria perceived a small gate, almost hid from observation by the foliage that overhung it; it was unlocked, and admitted her into a wilderness of the finest forest-trees, interspersed with flowering shrubs of every description; a thousand aromatic plants enamelled the mossy turf, and the trunks of the trees were many of them entwined by jessamines and passion-flowers. After walking about half a mile, the path gradually widened, and terminated in an amphitheatre formed by the trees, in the middle of which was a large piece of water. Weeping willows were planted on its banks, whose pendent boughs dipped in the crystal flood; and partly concealed in a picturesque ruin, which stood on its margin. One arch,

slightly shaded by some Lombardy poplars, was particularly light and elegant ; and on the broken pane of a window, the rays of the declining sun played with an almost dazzling brightness. On the opposite side of the water were planted large clumps of acacias, under one of which Valoria discovered an arbour of musk roses, and fatigued by her long walk, she was on the point of entering, when her whole attention was suddenly engrossed by the object before her. Extended on the mossy bank was a figure so exquisitely formed, that a distant observer might have mistaken it for a statue. His eyes were closed in sleep, and the breeze which wantoned among the foliage gently agitated the tresses of his black hair, which waved over a cheek whose bloom a painter might vainly have sought to emulate. Sweetness, and native majesty, sat on his polished brow, and the smile, which even in slumber hovered round his

mouth; bespoke the serenity of the mind within.

For some moments Valoria continued to gaze, with those emotions a person might be supposed to feel, who beholds a being of superior intelligence: but soon recovering from her surprize, she was hastily retreating from the bower—but it was too late. The slight rustling she made among the leaves awoke the stranger, who lifting up a pair of large, dark, beautiful eyes, arose from his recumbent posture, as he exclaimed, in a voice whose exquisite sweetness Valoria had never heard equalled :

“Do I still dream—or is the lovely vision before me, a reality !”

Shocked at the idea of having disturbed the stranger's repose, by her unseasonable intrusion ; our heroine attempted to

leave him without replying; when the youth, completely recovered from the effects of his slumber, advanced towards her, imploring her not to be alarmed, for that she had not the slightest danger to apprehend from him.

There was something so insinuating in the manners and accents of the stranger, that Valoria was re-assured; and covered with blushes, yet with that native grace which ever distinguished her, she apologized for intruding upon his retirement, by saying that chance, without her knowing it, had conducted her hither; and in searching for a place to rest in, after an unusually long walk, she had accidentally entered the arbour where he was sleeping."

"Say no more, I entreat you, lovely Signora," returned the stranger, a ray of pleasure increasing the lustre of his bril-

liant eye. "Whatever may have led you here, it has been productive of too much satisfaction for me not to rejoice in it. However," he continued, smiling, "since you owe me some compensation for awakening me from the most delicious dream I ever enjoyed, will you honour me by permitting me to attend you home? It grows late, and it is hardly safe for you to return alone."

Valoria hesitated—but the resistless pleadings of the stranger, added to her own fears of being out late by herself, overcame her reluctance; and timidly accepting his offered arm, they proceeded towards the wilderness. During their walk, our heroine discovered, by the conversation of her interesting companion, that he possessed a highly cultivated and elegant mind; nor did he appear less charmed by the intelligence of Valoria, which displayed itself, without affectation

in every word she uttered. In such society the walk could not but appear short; and she arrived at the fisherman's hut almost without knowing it; when, turning to the stranger, she informed him she was at home. An expression of unequivocal surprise passed over his features, and he was on the point of exclaiming: "Good God! it cannot be!"—but delicacy checked the expression, ere it rose to his lips. Crossing the little garden, he knocked at the door, which was opened by Giacomo; who after surveying him a few moments, suddenly exclaimed, in a tone of joy and astonishment: "Holy Mother! Signor Octavian, is it you? Who would have thought of seeing you here! Do come in-doors, I beg of you, My old dame will be so rejoiced to see you—It is so long since you were in this part of the country, I really thought you would never visit it again."

"I am much obliged to you, my good

friend, but I cannot possibly accept your kind invitation this evening, as I expect a party at the villa, who I fear are arrived, and wondering at my absence. I only came to escort this young lady home, and must hasten back as fast as possible. Remember me to Nanine; and assure her I will take the earliest opportunity of calling upon her." Then turning to Valoria, he wished her a good night, and gracefully kissing his hand to her, leaped over the low paling, and disappeared in a moment among the cliffs.

Valoria had just entered the house, when Nanine, who had been gathering a sallad in the garden behind it, came in, and hearing from her husband that the Signor Octavian had walked home with her, eagerly enquired where she had met with him, and why he would not stay? Valoria gratified her curiosity by relating her evening's adventure; and concluded

by requesting to know the name of the stranger, which in the hurry of his departure he had forgot to tell her.

“ He is the only son, Signora,” replied Nanine, assuming an air of consequence at her intelligence, “ of the Marchese di Veroni, and though I say it, who was his foster mother, there is not a more beautiful and amiable young gentleman in the whole kingdom of Naples. As for myself, I shall be bound to pray for him as long as I live, for it is now two years ago since a dreadful high tide carried away my husband’s boat, and all his fishing nets, which were destroyed by the waves; and to add to our distress, our landlord came upon us for our rent, and as we were unable to pay it, he threatened to sell all our furniture, and turn us out of doors. We were in terrible distress, and knew not what to do; but no sooner did Signor Octavian hear of our situation, than he

sent us money enough to pay our rent, and buy our fishing things again : and when he came of age, about six months since, he purchased our cottage of the farmer it belonged to, and gave it to us, "as a recompence," he said, for the care I took of him when he was an infant : though, God knows, I was well paid by the Marchesa for my trouble. Before this we were in great distress, for we have had a large family to bring up, and often did not know which way to turn ourselves ; but now we want for nothing, and are quite rich, and all from the goodness of Signor Octavian."

"But this," continued Nanine, "is nothing ; my eldest son, Claudio, lives with him as his valet ; and he says that the good his master does, is incalculable. And then he is so sweet tempered and gentle, and so brave and generous, that every body adores him ; and he is not like

our other young lords, who are given to all kind of bad courses, and spend their time in gambling and such things. No, no; Signor Octavian knows better than all that; and when he is down at the villa, he is always busy in reading, or painting, or playing upon music; for he is *so larned*, it would astonish you." Valoria's heart swelled, as if to take in so much goodness; and during her supper, Nanine related several anecdotes, which strikingly displayed the goodness of Octavian's heart; she could not withhold from him her warmest admiration and esteem.

The following morning as she was sitting in her own room, after breakfast, she heard the voice of Nanine in conversation with some one at the door; and distinguished her own name, she listened attentively, and caught these words, in a tone which convinced her it was the Signor Veroni's—"And so, Nanine, you

really do not know who this beautiful stranger is."

"On my honour, Signor Octavian, I do not. I am only sure she is an angel, as good and handsome as yourself, and that is saying a great deal."

"Do you think," returned Octavian, after a short silence, "that your fair guest will honour me with an interview this morning? I am very anxious to inquire after her health, and apologize for my rudeness last night, in suffering her to depart without knowing my name."

Nanine, without answering him, advanced to our heroine's parlour, and on entering the room, informed her that the Signor Octavian had called to inquire how she did, and would be very grieved, if he should go without seeing her. As she ceased speaking, Veroni himself appeared,

and Valoria, rising from the table where she was working, welcomed him with that sweet and timid grace which was so natural to her; and Nanine, after placing him a chair, hastened away. The conversation of Octavian was gay and animated, and such as could not fail of being agreeable to every one possessed of taste and sentiment; and Valoria's bashfulness gradually giving way, he found so many charms in her manners, that he thought not of going away, till Nanine came to inform our heroine that dinner was ready.

Octavian instantly rose from his seat, while he exclaimed: "I am very rude, I know, Signora; but who, while listening to your conversation, could remember such a thing existed as time?"

Valoria blushed deeply at this compliment, and Octavian wishing her a good morning, mounted his horse, and rode off.

He had not been gone more than an hour when a large parcel was brought to the cottage, directed to her, which on opening she found to contain a select collection of books and music, of the newest sort, with a note containing the following words :

“ Octavian de Veroni’s best compliments to the Signora Valoria, has taken the liberty of sending her a few books, which he hopes she will do him the honour of accepting. When he has finished them, he flatters himself he shall have the happiness of sending her some more.”

Valoria could not but be pleased with this mark of attention, which was, besides, really valuable to her ; for reading had been a luxury she had never enjoyed since her residence at the cottage. Its inhabitants had no books, but those

which served for the instruction of their children; and her own collection had been left at the castle de Retirero, with her other things. Those, therefore, which Octavian had sent, afforded her an inexhaustible fund of amusement; and in many of them the most beautiful passages were marked by him with a pencil, for her particular attention.

Few days now passed in which Claudio, under pretence of visiting his parents, did not come to the cottage with inquiries after Valoria's health, accompanied by presents of the finest fruit and flowers from the villa. Octavian too, sometimes, in his morning rides, would call in for half an hour; but our heroine, who considered her present situation as peculiarly delicate, received his visits in no other light than as a common acquaintance, when an accident occurred, which produced a more intimate connexion between them.

It was one fine morning that Valoria, accompanied by Rosella, went out upon the cliffs, to gather some rare and curious plants with which they abounded, and of which she wished to preserve some specimens. Followed by her little companion, Valoria climbed from crag to crag, with the agility of the mountain roe, and having collected a sufficient number of plants, she gave them into Rosella's care, and proceeded in search of wild strawberries, which grew on some part of the cliffs in great quantities. It was to obtain some of these from a little hollow in the rock, that Valoria unfortunately ventured too near the edge, and her footing giving way, she was precipitated into the dell below. For some moments Rosella stood uttering the most piercing shrieks, then hastily rushed down the winding path which led to the bottom, dreadfully convinced that she should there find her a mangled corpse. To her inexpressible surprize and

joy, she beheld Valoria about half way down the precipice, supported in the arms of a gentleman, who stood upon a ledge so narrow, as scarcely to afford a footing, and who, on his cautiously descending with his senseless burthen, she discovered to be Signor Octavian. Him indeed it was, to whom Valoria was indebted for her preservation from a violent and shocking death. Rambling alone beneath the cliffs, he had heard the shrieks of Rosella, and raising his eyes from whence it proceeded, he beheld Valoria, the velocity of whose fall was somewhat impeded by the shrubs that grew down the cliffs. Though almost petrified with horror, Octavian did not lose his presence of mind, but springing with the rapidity of lightning up the side of the rocks, he placed himself firmly against a projecting crag, and caught her in his arms as she descended. The violence of the shock, however, nearly forced him from his station, and in laying

hold of a branch, in order to save himself, he strained his arm in a most terrible manner. Occupied entirely for the safety of Valoria, he paid no attention to this accident, and with an almost frantic anxiety he watched the progress of her recovery. Slowly she revived from her insensibility, and to the infinite joy of Octavian declared herself unhurt, while with tears of gratitude she endeavoured to thank her preserver: but the emotions of her soul were too violent to be expressed by words, and the drops which fell fast on her lovely cheek, were the most eloquent interpreters of her feelings. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to walk, Octavian insisted on being permitted to escort her home, and as they proceeded forward, Valoria remarked, with uneasiness, the paleness and expression of suffering in his countenance; and tenderly inquired if he was unwell, or had hurt himself?

“I believe,” replied Octavian, “I have

given my arm a strain, which pains me a little; but it is nothing of any consequence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Valoria, with energy, "It is I who am the cause of your sufferings, of your being in pain; for I am sure, by your looks, you feel a great deal, though you do not complain of it. *Dear Signor Octavian,*" she added, in a tone of resistless softness, "do promise me you will have some advice, or I shall be quite unhappy." She stopped, deeply blushing at the energy of her own expressions. Octavian's eyes flashed fire as he replied, "shall you indeed! most lovely Valoria? I am then too happy."

Their arrival at the cottage prevented what he might have added, and wishing Valoria a good morning, he hastened home; for however lightly he might treat the accident he had met with, he was no

longer able to conceal the anguish he felt from it. The pain he endured brought on a fever, which lasted for several days, and confined him to his chamber: he was, however, fully compensated by the inquiries it produced from Valoria, whose grateful heart suffered real uneasiness from his situation, and who regularly sent Rosella twice a day to the villa, to learn the state of his health.

The first time his surgeon permitted him to go out, Octavian went to return his thanks to Valoria for these inquiries, and was received by her with an expression of gratitude and pleasure, that amply rewarded him for all he had suffered on her account. Our heroine indeed could not again behold her preserver without an emotion of interest, which his appearance was particularly calculated to inspire. He was grown much paler and thinner; and his arm, hung in a sling,

forcibly reminded her of the event, for which she was so much indebted to him.

To her expressions of gratitude, Octavian replied by assuring her, "that the obligation was entirely on his side; that he had only done his duty in seeking to save a fellow-creature from destruction; and that he was more than rewarded by the consciousness of having been of service to her."

Perceiving that her thanks were painful to him, Valoria dropped the subject; but every look, every feature was eloquent; and Octavian's heart felt a sensation of delight he had never experienced before. Scarcely a day now passed in which he did not visit the cottage; and Valoria, who regarded him as her preserver, always received him with a smile of pleasure. He accompanied her in her walks; he read or played to her when

she worked or drew ; and his taste, his accomplishments, his ever fascinating and pleasing conversation, were to her a source of never-failing amusement. To a heart as susceptible, and affections as ardent as Rinaldo Salviati's, Octavian joined that sweetness of temper, and gentleness of manners, the former was deficient in. Reared in the bosom of luxury, the heir of exalted honours and splendid possessions, the adulation of those who surrounded him had been unable to spoil the excellence of his natural disposition.

The Marchesa, his mother, did indeed idolize her son ; but her's was not the love of a weak doating parent. From his earliest years she had sought, with unre-mitted attention, to form his mind and manners ; and it was perhaps to the precepts and example of this excellent woman, that Octavian was chiefly indebted for the many good qualities he possessed.

Haughty in his behaviour, and stern and inflexible in his disposition, the Marchese was regarded by his son with fear and respect, rather than love ; but the tenderness of his mother was returned by him with the most fervent duty and affection ; and often did he speak to Valoria in such terms of her mildness, her benevolence, and goodness of heart, as called forth the most ardent expressions of esteem and admiration from his delighted auditor.

Octavian's education had been in a great measure superintended by the Marchesa, who had engaged tutors and masters of the first abilities to instruct him ; and, gifted by Nature with genius and the finest talents, they needed only the careful hand of cultivation to bring them to perfection. The attentions bestowed upon him were amply repaid by his assiduity and improvement ; and at the age of one-and-twenty, with a mind uncontami-

nated by a single vice, and a heart glowing with virtue, Octavian, in form, in manners, and in education, might vie with any young man in Italy, or perhaps in Europe.

Such was the character we have now introduced to our readers; and being such, we cannot wonder that he obtained, in the highest degree, the admiration and esteem of Valoria, who experienced in his society a happiness she had never before enjoyed, and which had its source in a congeniality of taste, of sentiments, and disposition. The more her intimacy with Octavian increased, the more highly did she estimate his character; and at length resolved to make to him an unreserved disclosure of her affairs, and from his advice and opinion to regulate her future conduct. With this intention she anxiously sought for an opportunity to put her design in practice; and one day;

when Octavian thoughtlessly expressed some surprize at her residing in so mean a dwelling as Jacomo's, Valoria, as if in answer to his question, related to him her whole story, and the motives which had led her to her present retreat. Octavian listened to her recital with emotions of mingled astonishment, pity, and admiration; and when she ceased speaking, he exclaimed with energy, while a tear increased the lustre of his fine eyes:

“ Sweet, amiable Valoria, how little have thy angelic virtues deserved so severe a destiny ! Oh, that I could interest my mother in your favour; from her you would find that protection your orphaned and deserted situation so much require: and her tenderness would indemnify you for the injustice of fortune. What happiness would be mine, could I be the means of obtaining for you the countenance of one so truly, so deservedly dear to me !”

"It would indeed give me the most exquisite pleasure," replied Valoria, "to be acquainted with the Marchesa di Veroni; and unkind as my fate has hitherto proved, I yet flatter myself with the hope of one day enjoying that satisfaction."—"Oh! I trust so;" cried Octavian with vivacity, "since on that depends in some measure the happiness of my future life."—He spoke with emotion, and checked himself as if fearful of having said too much; and Valoria, who observed his agitation, and was unwilling to renew it, changed the conversation, which was not resumed again that night.

The next time they met, Octavian was pensive and thoughtful; he did not, however, communicate the cause of his uneasiness to our heroine, whose delicacy prevented her from making any inquiries; while she sought, by every means in her power, to recal his cheerfulness, and her

efforts did not pass unnoticed by Veroni, whose expressive eyes eloquently declared his gratitude for her kind exertions. On taking his leave of her, he said he should call the following evening, when he hoped she would accompany him in a walk she had never taken before. Valoria promised her acquiescence with this request, and at the appointed hour Octavian again appeared at the cottage, and claimed the performance of her promise. In a moment her hat was tied on, and they proceeded on their intended excursion.

The sadness which had oppressed him the preceding day had vanished, and he conversed with more than usual animation, as he conducted Valoria along a carriage road, which led them to the entrance of the lawn in front of the villa di Veroni.

“ Whither are you going to carry me,

Octavian?" asked our heroine. "To the villa," he returned, "if you will grant me that pleasure. I wish to show you the house and grounds, and as the Marchese and my mother are shortly expected from Naples, I may not soon have another opportunity."

Valoria at first hesitated in consenting to this request, but the arguments and intreaties of Octavian got the better of her reluctance; and after a short walk through the park, they soon found themselves at the entrance of the villa. A colonnade of Parian marble extended the whole front of the building, under which were placed seats of a peculiarly elegant formation; and the various exotics which flourished around, diffused the most delicious fragrance. Octavian now conducted his fair companion into a hall, supported by pillars of the Doric order. From the ceiling, which was painted in the most

exquisite style, with scenes from the classics, were suspended by gilt chains, Grecian lamps of crystal, and the different niches in the walls were ornamented with statues of the most perfect workmanship. Through this hall Valoria was led to a small saloon beyond it, whose walls were hung with straw-coloured silk, painted with medallions of flowers; the chairs, sofas and curtains of the same, fringed with silver. Octavian now requested our heroine to be seated, and ringing the bell, desired the servant who entered to send in refreshments. In a moment a salver was brought with wine, ice, fruits, &c. of which he earnestly invited her to partake; and after sitting a short time to recover themselves from the fatigues of their walk, Valoria was conducted over the remainder of the house, all of which was fitted up in a style of equal elegance and magnificence as what she had before seen. One wing of the villa commanded

an extensive view of the ocean, the other looked out upon the lawn, which, on one side, was terminated by a fine lake, whose margin was planted with almond, orange, and acacia trees. From the house they proceeded to the gardens, where all the charms of art and nature were united. Bowers of fragrance, parterres of the choicest flowers, and shrubberies laid out by the hand of taste itself, all conspired to delight the eye, and enchant the imagination. The last place they visited was a wilderness, which extended from the front of the house. The tall forest trees enlivened by flowers, and the shrubs planted beneath them, were familiar to the recollection of Valoria, and a few turns in the serpentine path, brought her to the spot where she first met Octavian.

The sun was sinking beyond the western skies, as they entered the well remembered bower; and a nightingale from a

neighbouring thicket poured its soft notes on the ear of eve. An expression of the most profound sensibility was visible in the features of Octavian, as, clasping the hand of Valoria, he exclaimed: "How sweet, how exquisitely lovely, is the scene before us!—Do you not mark Valoria, with what lustre yon bright orb gleams on the water, and darts its long rays between the shadowy trees? Methinks these roses smell more sweet than usual, and the song of the nightingale possesses a melody I never heard before.—You are silent—Ah! tell me, does your heart participate in the rapturous emotions of mine—or are the sensations I now feel, of a nature so uncommon, as to be confined to my own breast alone?"

"Do you imagine, then, Octavian," replied Valoria, smiling at the energy of his expressions: "that I am insensible to the beauties of an hour like this?—

Believe me, my heart swells with sentiments of joy and gratitude, too great for utterance !”

The tears which sparkled in her fine dark eyes confirmed her words; and they continued absorbed in reflection, when the moon slowly appeared behind the acacias, and shed a soft and chastened lustre over the scene. For some moments Octavian watched its progress, as it gradually ascended in the heavens; then turning to his lovely companion, he exclaimed, in a voice stifled by excess of feeling: “My Valoria !”—She started; and awakened from the reverie in which she had been plunged, proposed returning home.

“Not yet,” returned Octavian hastily. “This hour is formed for love. and here, at thy feet, I swear to dedicate it to love alone!—Do not be alarmed, sweet angel,”

he added, perceiving her change colour :
“ my sentiments are pure as the lovely
object that inspires them. Valoria, I
love you ! ”

To describe the emotions of our heroine,
at this declaration, would be impossible:
her complexion varying every moment,
from an ashy paleness to the deepest
crimson.—She was unable to articulate a
single word, so great was her surprize and
confusion ; while Octavian, who marked
with acute anxiety her changing counten-
ance, and who every instant dreaded that
she would faint, knelt by her side, and
pressing both her trembling hands in his,
softly articulated, “ My own Valoria ! my
only love ! why are you thus agitated ?
—Am I indeed so much the object of
your dislike, or terror, as to excite these
violent emotions ?—Speak ; ah speak !
and say at once I am the most wretched
of mankind ! ”

“Hate you ! despise you, Octavian !” she exclaimed. “Oh ! no ; my heart is not so devoid of gratitude !—Yet, how can I credit your present declaration !—In what light am I to consider it ?”

“As the unreserved avowal of an honourable passion,” returned Octavian warmly ; “for here I swear, by all my hopes of happiness hereafter, thou alone, Valoria, shalt be my wife !—For never, never, will I wed another.”

“Oh, Octavian !” cried she, speaking with difficulty from her tears : “and dare you hope that the Marchese di Veroni, proud and haughty as he is known to be, will ever give his consent : ever receive into his family the unknown, unportioned Valoria ? Oh, do not think it,—for my heart assures me it is impossible ! and if you value your future peace, if you would save me from the soul-rending conviction

of having caused your unhappiness ; forget you have ever known me, or consider me only, as your friend !”

“ Never, Valoria !” exclaimed Octavian. “ My affection is not the mere effervescence of a youthful fancy. It is founded on a congeniality of sentiments, of taste, and virtue ; and can be extinguished only with my existence !—I am not insensible to the many obstacles that oppose my wishes ; but they may be surmounted by patience and perseverance ; and if I might flatter myself with the most distant hope of gaining your affections ; were I even assured of not being the object of your indifference ; every difficulty would appear light in comparison. — Beloved Valoria ! let me hear from your own lips, that I may hope.” He paused, and with his eyes steadfastly fixed on her face, awaited an answer. Valoria was silent ; but her blushes, her

tears, her downcast eyes expressed the tumults of her soul, and conveyed to the throbbing heart of Octavian, the joyful conviction, that he might indeed hope every thing from her awakened sensibility—but the pure and genuine delicacy of his mind prompted him to conceal it in his own breast; and, eager to relieve the embarrassment of Valoria, he proposed to her to return home, to which she readily consented: and during their walk to the cottage, the conversation turned entirely on indifferent subjects.

As soon as our heroine was alone, her thoughts naturally recurred to the events of the evening. Hurried as her ideas were, her most predominant sensation was pleasure, from the assurance that she was the object of Octavian's love, for whom her young and guileless heart had almost unconsciously conceived the only affection it had ever known. Short

lived, however, was the joy this conviction afforded; the almost insurmountable obstacles that opposed their mutual happiness arose in terrible array before her appalled imagination, and her transient exultation was succeeded by the deepest despondency. From her knowledge of the Marchese's character, she concluded any attempt to obtain his concurrence, would be ineffectual, however Octavian might flatter himself to the contrary; for she had already seen, in the family of the Conte Salviati, what influence a violent prejudice may obtain over the mind. These reflections kept her waking great part of the night, and she was scarcely risen the next morning, when a servant delivered her the following note from Octavian :

“ When I returned home last night,
“ my beloved Valoria, I found a letter
“ from my father, commanding me to set

“ out immediately for Naples. Much as
“ I am surprised at this summons, when
“ I expected his arrival every day at the
“ villa, I cannot think it has been caused
“ by any suspicion of my present en-
“ gagements, since there is no one near
“ me who could possibly have commu-
“ nicated any intelligence of that kind to
“ him. I am too much hurried to say
“ more. Heaven bless you till my re-
“ turn, and believe

“ Yours, eternally and faithfully,

“ OCTAVIAN DI VERONI,”

Valoria's mind, agitated before, was rendered still more uneasy by this billet. Already her foreboding heart anticipated the sorrows of the future, and shrunk from the idea of those struggles she might have to encounter. The passion of Rinaldo had caused her real unhappiness, when her heart had been uninterested in the event: how then could she endure to

behold Octavian wretched, and under the displeasure of his father, for his disinterested attachment to her—the thought was insupportable, and she abandoned herself to sadness. Heavily moved the hours of Veroni's absence, and a week had passed since his departure, when one evening as she was walking on the beach, deeply meditating on her situation, she was startled on hearing footsteps, and on looking up she beheld Octavian himself advancing towards her. As he approached nearer, she perceived that he was pale and dejected; and in a voice stifled by various emotions she faltered out an inarticulate inquiry after his health. A ray of joy darted across his features as he tenderly saluted Valoria, but it was transient, and soon succeeded by a still deeper despondency, as slowly walking by her side, he remained apparently buried in reflexion. Trembling in expectation of what all this tended to, Valoria conti-

nued silent, when, after a short, but severe struggle, as if to obtain resolution; he suddenly turned to her, and abruptly inquired if she had heard any thing from his family in his absence ?

“ Heard from your family ! Octavian ? ” returned the surprized Valoria, “ Why should you imagine so ? ”

“ Because I expected it,” said Octavian, “ for it would be useless to conceal from you that I have suffered much uneasiness since we parted. When I reached Naples, I was received by my father with unusual kindness, and nothing occurred for some days to confirm the apprehension I had set out with. One morning, however, the Marchese summoned me into his library, and after some indifferent conversation, he abruptly asked me if I was acquainted with the Duca de Alcarmo ?—“ I replied, that I

had frequently seen that nobleman, but that our personal intimacy was almost confined to a congé, or the compliments of the day, when we met by accident."

" Well, then, Octavian," returned my father, " my motive for recalling you to Naples, was to procure a more particular acquaintance for you, with the Duca ; whose rank, riches, and influence at court, is greater perhaps than almost any other nobleman in the kingdom. It has been my good fortune to possess his high esteem and favour, and he has lately intimated to me his wish to perpetuate our friendship by the greatest proof he could possibly give of it." — The Marchese here paused, as if to give more importance to what was to follow ; while, with a presageful heart, I waited the conclusion of his information. In a few minutes he again proceeded.

“ Although you may not know her, you have doubtless heard of the Duca’s daughter, the Lady Lucillia, so much celebrated for her charms and accomplishments.—Well, then, Octavian, to be brief, it is his desire to unite our families in the person of this lady. A proposal which confers so much honour, admits only of one reply : and I accordingly sent for you here, to introduce you formally to the Duca de Alcarino ; and as the Lady Lucillia has been informed of her father’s intentions, she is prepared to receive you as her acknowledged lover.”

“ To describe my feeling to you, my Valoria,” continued Octavian, “ during this conference would be impossible. My brain was bewildered by the various and contrary ideas which crowded upon it, and before I could sufficiently recover myself to speak, the Marchese left me, with an order to attend him in the even-

ing to the Alcarino palace. As going hither could neither falsify my plighted vows, nor lead me into any engagement with the Duca, I obeyed, and was presented to the lord of the mansion, and by him to his daughter. She was indeed, as my father had told me, very beautiful and accomplished; but, even had I never known Valoria, she was not the woman who could ever have gained my affections. Her form, though perfect in symmetry, had more of majesty than grace, and the beauty of her face was disfigured by its expression. In vain I looked for that sweet retiring modesty, that blushing timidity I have so long been accustomed to behold and admire; scorn and haughtiness shone in her eyes, and a proud consciousness of her charms appeared in every feature. Her manners to me were particularly gracious and condescending; but there was so much levity in her whole deportment, such an evident desire to

charm, that I was completely disgusted, and availed myself of the first opportunity to return home.

“ The next morning, when I was alone with my father, he launched out in the most extravagant encomiums on the lady Lucillia, and concluded by asking me, if I did not think her the most perfect creature I had ever beheld? Whatever may be my faults, Valoria, hypocrisy is not one of them; I candidly avowed to the Marchese my opinion of Lucillia, and concluded by assuring him, that however honoured I felt myself by the Duca’s proposal, it was impossible for me to unite myself to a woman I could never love.

“ For some moments my father was silent, from excess of rage, and exclaimed at length, in a voice rendered inarticulate by passion: ‘ There is then truth in the story, whose falsehood I would have as-

served yesterday with my life. A friend of mine informed me, that you had formed an attachment with a girl who has resided for some time in the neighbourhood of the villa, whose origin was unknown, and her situation equivocal. Confident that my son could never act so derogatory to his own honour, and that of his noble family, I gave no credit to this account, and summoned you to Naples, to prove its falsehood, by a union with the fair Lucilla.' Conceive, my Valoria, for I cannot describe to you my feelings at this discourse of the Marchese, in which I heard you spoken of in a style that tortured my heart. When he ceased speaking I related to him every particular of our acquaintance, and declared my firm resolution never to marry any one but you. I will not dwell upon what ensued; suffice it to say, my father's indignation knew no bounds, and he solemnly swore to disinherit me for ever, if I did not immedi-

ately abandon my degrading attachment, and marry the Lady Lucillia. Some days were passed in useless altercation ; when, under pretence of visiting a friend, I returned to the villa, to communicate to you the result of my journey."

Pale, trembling, and in tears, Valoria had listened to Octavian, without interrupting him ; her worst fears were now verified ; and, when he ceased speaking, she sunk upon his shoulder, motionless, and almost without sense. He caught her in his arms, and pressing her to his heart, exclaimed, "Awake! Valoria, awake!—Speak to me, my love, my wife!"

"Thy wife!—Octavian," she faintly articulated, and raising herself from his shoulder. "Never, never!—leave me—in pity leave me ; and let it be for the last time!"

"By all that's sacred," exclaimed Octavian, "I will never resign you!—My vows are registered in Heaven; and when I break them, may its vengeance descend upon me.—Oh, Valoria!" he added, in a voice whose pathos thrilled through her soul; "drive me not from you; for indeed I am very miserable."—He paused, his expressive eyes swam in tears, and a long silence succeeded, interrupted only by the heavy sobs of our heroine.—After a few moments, she made a violent effort to conquer her feelings, and in low tremulous tones she addressed Octavian.

"If you do really love me; if you regard my peace and your own; in pity cease talking in this manner.—We must part, Octavian, indeed we must; your happiness demands it; and on my knees"—and she sunk at his feet, "I implore you, by all the love you feel for me, never to behold me more.—Do not, for my sake,

incur the displeasure of the Marchese, and the contempt of your friends.—It may cost you something at first to part for ever, but it will soon be over, and you will then think on Valoria as your sister, who, though she can never see you again, will pray every moment for your happiness!”

“Impossible! impossible, Valoria!” exclaimed Octavian; “nor would you propose it, if you felt for the anguish that now tortures my very soul!”

“Ah, say not so,” she returned; “my heart does feel, oh, most acutely—and to behold you under the displeasure of your family, on my account, would indeed break it at once.”

“Then my happiness is dear to you, sweet girl!” exclaimed Octavian, and a

ray of rapturous joy flashed in his dark eyes.

"If it will give you any pleasure," replied Valoria, blushing, "to hear me say so, I confess it is most dear to me.—Oh, so dear, that I would die even this very moment, to make you happy!"

"Angelic, artless, charmer!" cried Octavian with ecstasy. "In vain would you persuade me to relinquish my interest in that guileless heart, when every moment entwines thee more closely to mine.—Heaven itself, my Valoria, has destined us for each other. Let us have patience, and perseverance, and rely on its goodness to remove the obstacles which now impede our happiness—but never, no never will I voluntarily resign my hopes of felicity; and here on this lovely hand I ratify my vow."—As he spoke, he pressed Valoria's hand to his lips; and warned

by the lateness of the hour, they returned to the fisherman's, where Octavian bade her farewell, after obtaining her permission to see her the following day.

We shall not dwell on the reflections which accompanied Valoria to her couch, since they were such as for the last week had invariably attended her. A few days passed, during which Octavian sought, by every argument in his power, and urged with all the fascinating eloquence he so peculiarly possessed, to gain her consent to a secret marriage—but Valoria's resolution on this point was immovable, and she firmly withstood his seducing rhetoric, and the powerful pleadings of her own heart, in favour of a measure which would unite her to the most amiable, the most beloved of mankind.

One morning Octavian came not as

usual, though he had promised to be at the cottage immediately after breakfast, as it was his intention to spend a part of the day with Valoria, and take a walk with her to the villa. Noon passed, and he did not make his appearance ; when, as she sat in her own room playing on a harp, which Octavian had procured for her, Rosella entered and informed her that a grand gentleman on horseback, with a servant behind him, was come to the cottage, and desired to see her.

“ Who is it, Rosella ? ” demanded Valoria, a little agitated. The girl did not know, and neither of her parents were at home. Our heroine hesitated a moment, whether or not she should admit the stranger ; when a step was heard in the adjoining room, and the appearance of a gentleman she had never seen before, at the entrance, put an end to her deliberations. The person of the stranger was strikingly ele-

gant and majestic, but an air of excessive haughtiness was visible in his whole deportment, as, advancing toward Valoria, he fixed his piercing eyes in penetrating scrutiny upon her. Though somewhat confused by his manner, she arose, and laying aside her instrument, timidly offered him a chair, as she sweetly said :

“ As I have not, Signor, the happiness of knowing you, you will excuse the liberty I take, in asking what has procured me the honour of this visit ?”

“ I am the Marchese di Veroni,” returned the stranger sternly, “ and the motive of my coming here was to behold the paragon who has so successfully ensnared the affections of my deluded son.—In reality,” he added, “ here is beauty sufficient to captivate a more experienced heart, and had Octavian merely confined himself to a transient infatuation, I might

have overlooked it; but to think of marrying an artful adventuress—Oh, it is not to be pardoned !”

“My Lord,” replied Valoria with dignity, while the pure glow of insulted innocence mantled on her cheek; “I am no artful adventuress, nor have I ever sought to ensnare the affections of your son. Found in my infancy, by the hand of unexampled benevolence I was brought up in the lap of luxury and indulgence, and was taught by the noble friends that cherished me the most exalted sentiments of virtue.—Bereft, by death, of these beloved friends, I was left as it were alone in the wide world, and flying from the pursuit of a man I abhorred, I met with an asylum in a family, noble and good as the one that first cherished me. An unfortunate attachment to me, on the part of their only son, compelled me, as the only means of restoring the peace of my benefactors,

to quit their hospitable roof, and in the seclusion of this village, I sought for that retirement my circumstances required. Here, my Lord, most unfortunately for him, I became acquainted with Signor Octavian, who in a moment of eminent peril preserved my life, and obtained an everlasting title to my gratitude.—I do not deny that he avowed his love for me; but heaven is my witness, I forcibly represented to him the objections that might be urged against it, and implored him, by every argument, to relinquish a passion so inauspicious. That he did not comply with my request cannot be imputed to me, and he will himself assure you, that no persuasions on his part were able to obtain my consent to a clandestine marriage.”

The Marchese started.—“ Ah!” he exclaimed, “ and did Octavian go so far, and you refuse your compliance to his

proposal? Why, then, it must indeed be owned you have acted very properly in this affair—and indeed it is fortunate for you to have possessed so much prudence; for I here inform you my son is entirely dependent on me, and though his allowance is ample, and suitable to his rank, it is at any time in my power, by withdrawing it, to throw him upon the world a titled beggar.”

“My Lord,” replied Valoria, “I did not mention my rejection to Signor Octavian’s proposition to obtain applause; and any considerations of a pecuniary nature had no share in my determination. No, my Lord; your son, deprived of riches, and reduced to the most abject station, would have an equal claim to my regard as the heir of greatness and affluence. But the idea of uniting myself with any one, unknown to, and contrary to the inclination of, their family, is so

derogatory to my conceptions of rectitude, so truly painful to my heart, that I would not, on such terms, become the wife of a prince, however dear he might be to me."

The Marchese was softened, and even charmed, by the noble and exalted sentiments of Valoria, whose sincerity might be traced in her voice, her look, her every feature; but his pride prevented him acknowledging this even to himself, and after a moment's silence, he exclaimed: "All this is very fine, Signora; but I must have greater proofs of your sincerity than mere words, before I feel myself convinced. No consideration on earth can ever induce me to consent to my son's attachment, and it is my determination that you immediately quit this place, since here you cannot possibly think of remaining."

There was a proud arrogance in the

voice and manners of the Marchese, an insulting appearance of authority, that roused every feeling of resentment in our heroine's gentle heart, and in spirited accents she replied : " And by what right, my Lord, would you chase me from the asylum that rustic benevolence has afforded me, an exile, destitute, forlorn, and oppressed ?—I found under their humble roof a peaceful shelter, and experienced from their family every species of kindness and respect ; and your Lordship would deprive me of the only comfort my ruthless destiny has left me, with no other show of justice, than the power of doing it—would throw me upon a world, where I possess not a single friend to receive or protect me from those dangers my sex, my youth, and inexperience are particularly exposed to."

Overcome by the recollection of her present situation, so different from that

when she was sheltered under the fostering wing of maternal love, Valoria was unable to proceed, and tears fell from her eyes, and dropped on her snowy bosom.

Stern and unfeeling as the Marchese was, he could not behold the tears of a beautiful young woman, without experiencing some degree of compunction at having caused them, and hastily he exclaimed, in a softened voice : “ No, no, Signora, I certainly do not mean so.— You have quite misunderstood my intention. I should consider it beneath my dignity to act with harshness towards a woman, unless I was compelled by herself to do it, and you have too much sweetness and docility in your appearance, to give me any apprehensions of that nature. To quit this neighbourhood, however, is absolutely requisite for you; and as I have heard a great deal from Octavian of your talents and accomplish-

ments, you need not, I conceive, be under any uneasiness for your future support, since merit, you know, seldom fails of obtaining encouragement and reward."

There was, in spite of his endeavours to conceal it, something sarcastic in the Marchese's tone, in the latter part of this sentence; and Valoria, whose spirits were depressed before, felt herself unable to reply. The Marchese, after remaining silent a few moments, arose from his seat, as he exclaimed: "I must now, Signora, bid you a good morning; and to prevent your feeling any anxiety from not seeing Octavian, I take the liberty of informing you, I have peremptorily commanded him, as he would avoid my severest displeasure, not to come here without my permission."

Valoria curt'sied without speaking, and the Marchese again wished her a

good morning, and slightly bowing, quitted the apartment. The spirits which had hitherto supported our heroine, now entirely gave way, and she wept bitterly over her own fate, and that of the man she loved. The unkind, and almost insolent behaviour of the Marchese, had deeply wounded her sensitive heart, and she now indeed felt the mortifications that helpless, unprotected indigence, too often experiences from the great and wealthy. An hour had scarcely elapsed, since the departure of her visitor, when Valoria received the following note :

- “ My amiable young friend,
“ The account I have received from
“ the Marchese of his visit, has so highly
“ interested me in your favour, that if
“ you are not engaged this evening, at
“ seven o’clock, I particularly desire to
“ see you, as I have much to say to you,
“ of importance to us both. In the hope

"of meeting you at home, I shall call at
"the hour I have appointed, and remain
"till then,

"Your sincere friend,

"C. DI VERONI."

This letter of the Marchesa was a balm to the wounded heart of Valoria, and though it was bedewed with her tears, they were no longer called forth by the keen feelings of agonized sensibility. They relieved her oppressed mind, and anxious to appear to as much advantage as possible in the eyes of this so much venerated Marchesa, she hastened to her chamber to make some alteration in her dress against her arrival; and never had she looked more interestingly lovely, than when she again descended to the parlour, to wait for her expected visitor. The sound of a carriage at length announced the Marchesa's approach, and in an agitation she sought

in vain to conquer, Valoria advanced to receive her, when the door was flung open by Nanine, and she entered the room. She appeared about six and thirty, and her face and figure, which still retained the most exquisite beauty, strongly resembled Octavian's. Her voice, too, as she kindly returned the welcome of Valoria, thrilled to her heart, from the striking similarity it bore to his.

As soon as the first compliments were over, the Marchesa took a chair by our heroine, and gently taking her passive hand, she addressed her in a tone of ineffable sweetness.

"I requested this interview, my young friend, to have a very serious conference with you. Nay, do not be alarmed, for I assure you, no harsh or unkind expression shall fall from my lips. I came hither to talk to you as a friend; as one whose

happiness is dear to me, for my Octavian's sake, and I think I may say for your own: and, believe me, since I have seen you, perfect as you have been described to me, and prejudiced as I before was in your favour, by the accounts I have heard of your character, I can no longer wonder at the extravagant passion of my son."

Deeply penetrated by such a compliment, from one whose good opinion she was so highly anxious to obtain, Valoria was unable to express her gratitude otherwise than by kissing the beautiful hand of the Marchesa, and bathing it with her tears.—After a momentary silence, she proceeded.

"I need not tell you, Valoria, that Octavian is inexpressibly dear to me; for that mother must indeed be unworthy such a son, who did not feel for him the tenderest love. His happiness has ever

been my fondest, my most cherished hope. Think then you, whose heart is fraught with sensibility, what must be my sensations to behold the darling of my heart abandoned to the misery of inauspicious love; to behold him wasting his youth in anguish, and pining away under the influence of a slow consuming sadness.— I dare not flatter you that any consideration will ever induce the Marchese to consent to his union with you; for so well do I know his haughty inflexibility, that he would rather, much rather, follow his only son to an early grave, than see him wedded to one beneath him. Thus circumstanced, Octavian has nothing to hope; yet, with the tenacity of despair, he indulges a delusive expectation of he knows not what; nor can the displeasure of his father, or the wretchedness he is bringing on himself, prevail on him to relinquish this most unfortunate attachment.—Nay, Valoria, he is insensible to

the sorrow, the intreaties of his mother, whose slightest command, till now, he ever faithfully complied with; and though agonized at my distress, and kneeling at my feet bathed in tears, he conjured me to ask his life, but not implore him to resign Valoria.—In this state of distraction, my young friend," continued the Marchesa, "I have only one appeal to make, and that is to you. On you alone rest my hopes of inducing Octavian to listen to the voice of reason, of saving him and his family from the misery that awaits them."

"I save Octavian from misery!" exclaimed Valoria, in a voice almost inarticulate from her tears: "Oh! Marchesa, tell me but the means, and though death itself is in my way, I will fly to do it!"

The Marchesa intreated our agitated heroine to be calm, and as soon as she was a little tranquilized, she again ad-

dressed her. "Notwithstanding the ill success of his first attempt, Octavian, I know, still flatters himself with the hope of persuading you to consent to a private marriage. But, oh! Valoria, if, you would avoid everlasting misery for you both, beware of plunging into an abyss, from whence there is no recall! My son has nothing independent of his father, whose vindictive disposition would lead him, in such a case, to heap every species of wretchedness and ignominy upon him. And could you bear to see the beloved of your heart, under a parent's dreadful malediction: contemned by the world, deserted by all his former friends, and cut off from that society he has been constantly accustomed to? Can you destroy all the exalted expectations, all the prospects, his high birth and connexions entitle him to look forward to, and doom him to pass the rest of his life in poverty and obscurity?"

Valoria was unable to reply, but she sobbed convulsively—the Marchesa proceeded.—“Octavian will urge to you, that the loss of friends, of rank, of riches, are nothing in comparison with the misery of being deprived of you. But, believe me, these arguments are founded on the enthusiasm of a romantic love, and will lose all their force, when examined by the sober eye of unprejudiced reason. Think you, Valoria, that Veroni, the heir of splendour and affluence, accustomed to that respect and attention they naturally obtain for their possessor, and with a mind noble and exalted as his station—do you think that such a one could possibly be happy, when, for the sake of an ill-placed passion, he had become a voluntary exile from his friends, his family, and fortune—condemned to waste his life in some obscure corner of the world, with no other inheritance to bequeath his off-

spring than that penury and degradation he had himself brought upon them.

“ My son,” continued the Marchesa, “ considers the engagement he has entered into with you as sacred; and would regard it a species of perjury to retract his oath to you. But it is in your power, my young friend, to dissolve this engagement; restore him his plighted vows, and by a solemn promise never to become his wife, without his father’s consent, at once put an end to every hope of that nature. The sacrifice, I know, will be painful, will be agonizing to you both; but believe me it is not impossible.—I am well acquainted with the firmness of Octavian’s character, when his fate is irrevocably decided; he will support it with fortitude, and time will restore him to peace, if not to happiness. For yourself, my dear Valoria, a consciousness of acting rightly will be your support; and the conviction

that to you Octavian is indebted for his preservation from ruin, and his return to bliss, will one day reward you for your present sufferings."

The Marchesa ceased; but Valoria made no answer—Motionless she sat, her face covered with both her hands, and her bosom agitated by convulsive sighs. Severe was the struggle between love and principle, which rent her heart; but the latter at length conquered, and falling at the Marchesa's feet, she exclaimed in a faint and inarticulate voice; "Mother of my Octavian, you have prevailed!—I here swear to comply with your every request, and Octavian is lost to me for ever!"—She could add no more; a mist swam before her eyes; and with a chilling, universal shudder, she fell back senseless.

Though greatly alarmed, the Marchesa raised her from the floor, and sustaining

her head on her bosom, bathed her temples and hands with volatiles. In a few moments she unclosed her eyes, as her gentle supporter tenderly said—"Valoria, my dear child, how are you?"

"Oh, Marchesa!" cried the weeping girl, "call me again by that sweet name, and my heart will not then be quite desolate."

"Yes, my lovely young friend," returned the amiable Marchesa, affectionately embracing her; "You are, you ever shall be the child of my heart—and, for the future, depend on finding in me a mother, whose maternal tenderness will endeavour to console you for the noble sacrifice you have made at her representations."

Valoria's sobs were her only answer, as leaning on the Marchesa's bosom, she

bathed it with tears of gratitude.—As soon as she was somewhat composed, the Marchesa rising from her seat, exclaimed: “I must now quit you, my dear: it grows late, and my family will wonder at my long absence. Good night,” she added, tenderly kissing her cheek, “and do not forget you have a friend in the Marchesa di Veroni.”

Valoria raised the hand of her amiable friend to her lips, in silent gratitude, and the Marchesa again bidding her farewell, hastened to the carriage which was waiting for her. Melancholy in the extreme were the thoughts of our heroine, when she once more found herself alone.—Her heart, stunned as it were by excess of wretchedness, had no distinct sensation of its feelings.—All she was conscious of was, that she had relinquished Octavian for ever; and the anguish of this idea absorbed every other. By degrees her mind began to recover its tone, and on

her knees she implored of Heaven to inspire her with firmness sufficient to sustain her through the mental conflicts she was doomed to encounter. The tears she now shed, relieved her burning brain ; and the fond hope she cherished of the friendship and protection of the so much venerated Marchesa, afforded some degree of consolation to her almost breaking heart. With this hope for her support, and with a determined resolution to adhere to the line of conduct her duty called upon her to pursue, Valoria retired to her pillow, but sleep denied its balmy influence to her woes, and with the first dawn she left her restless couch, and sought, by change of scene, to divert her thoughts from dwelling on the subject of her wretchedness.

Sad and heavily moved the day ; and Valoria, restless and unhappy, wandered despondingly among scenes, rendered dear to her by the recollection of those

hours which she now feared were fled for ever. It was late when she retired to her chamber; and unable to sleep, she arose from her bed, and flinging a dressing gown over her, went to the window and opened it. The moon, which shone in an unclouded sky, tipped the tall cliffs with its silvery light, and sparkled on the clear and unruffled bosom of the ocean. Valoria, as she surveyed the scene before her, could not avoid comparing its sweet tranquillity to the tumultuous feelings of her own mind.—“Alas!” she cried, “how gay, how calm is all around me; how dark, how comfortless, is all within!”—She paused—tears fell from her eyes; when suddenly she perceived the figure of a man emerge from behind a cliff, and advance towards the cottage. With one bound he vaulted over the low paling that surrounded it, and the next moment Valoria beheld him beneath her window. His figure, enveloped in a long cloak and

a large hat slouched over his eyes, prevented her from recognizing his features; when her own name, pronounced in the well-known tones of Octavian's voice, dissipated the alarm Valoria had experienced at first seeing him; and she again approached the window from which she had retreated, to watch the motions of the supposed stranger.

"Octavian!" she exclaimed, "what brings you here at this unseasonable hour?"

"I am come by stealth, my beloved Valoria," he replied, "to converse with you, though only for a few moments.—I will not ask you to admit me into the house; since for worlds I would not have the breath of calumny glance at the fair fame of my adored!—But I entreat you to come to the parlour window, from which I can converse with you more conveniently than here."

Valoria waved her hand, in token of acquiescence, and hastily throwing on her cloaths, descended to the parlour. In a moment the casement was unfastened, and her hand extended to Octavian, who pressed it to his lips, as he exclaimed:—"A thousand thanks! my Valoria, for this mark of your confidence.—Oh!" he continued, "this moment, when I again behold you, is a reward for all the wretchedness I have endured since last we parted.—Tell me, my life, are you glad to see me once more?"

"Oh, yes!" returned the artless girl, "yet it is mixed with fear—should the Marchese know of your coming here"—

"He shall know nothing of it, my Valoria," said Octavian with tenderness. "It has indeed cost me much to elude his suspicions, and obtain an interview with you. The Duca de Alcarão and

his family are now at the villa; every hour of the day I have been compelled to dedicate to them; and the Marchese, apprehensive that I might steal out at night, contrived that my apartment should be through that of the Duca's son, who he has tutored to be a kind of watch upon my conduct. Innumerable were the schemes I projected to obtain a sight of you, without effect: and I almost began to despair, when my faithful Claudio procured me a ladder of ropes, by which I descended from my window, and thus disguised I hastened hither. And now, my best love," continued Octavian, "listen to me patiently, and do not be angry when I declare that my present design is to move your pity in my behalf, and prevail on you to terminate a life of suspense and wretchedness, which is become insupportable.—I am now fully convinced, that the consent of the Marchese to our union can never be obtained;

my resolution never to wed another, is equally firm and immoveable ; and, consequently, I apprehend every evil to you from his rage and disappointment. Give me, then, my Valoria, a legal right to protect you.—A venerable Monk, a friend of mine, has promised me his assistance, and to-morrow night, if you will consent, shall make you mine by bonds too strong for human force to unclothe them.”

Dreadful now was the conflict in Valoria’s heart—but her resolution was unshaken, and in broken tones she exclaimed :—“ Never, Octavian ; never will I become your wife, without the concurrence of your family ; for too well am I acquainted with the miseries that would result to both of us from such a step, ever to hazard it.”

“ Valoria,” returned Octavian, after a momentary silence, “ I fondly flattered

myself you loved me ; but I am deceived—since poverty and its attendant evils are more formidable to your imagination, than an eternal separation from the man who adores you !” —

“ My dear friend,” exclaimed our heroine with tenderness—“ I do love you ; Heaven alone knows how ardently.—For your sake I would endure penury, ignominy, nay death itself—but my word is pledged never to be yours clandestinely ; and though my heart may break, it shall never shrink from the trial it is fated to encounter.”

“ And who,” cried Octavian, “ has taken advantage of the gentleness and docility of thy disposition, to shackle you with such a promise ?”

“ The friend of us both, Octavian,” returned Valoria, “ thy dear, thy inestim-

able mother.—Yet think not she sought by any artful means, to convince me of the propriety of my present resolution.—Oh! no; plain and simple were her arguments; my reason yielded conviction to them; and at her feet I vowed——”

“Hold! hold! Valoria,” interrupted Octavian: “I have heard enough!—You, too, have abandoned me; and my destiny is decided.—Cruel father! you may now indeed triumph!”—A faint sickness came over him; he staggered, and would have fallen, but Valoria caught his arm, and supporting his head on her bosom, bathed his temples with her lavender water. In a few moments he revived, and sustaining himself against the window-frame, exclaimed mournfully, “Cruel, cruel Valoria, what have you done!”

“Dear friend,” she returned, “accuse me not; I have only obeyed the stern

dictates of duty ; and destiny alone is to blame, which so cruelly persecutes us !— Oh, Octavian," she continued, " look not thus angrily upon me ; regard me not with those reproachful glances ; for indeed I cannot support the idea of your displeasure ; and my heart, lacerated as it is by misfortune, would then break at once !"

Octavian continued silent, with his face covered by his hands, as if to conceal his emotions. At length advancing, he caught Valoria's hand as he exclaimed, " Forgive me, my life, if I have distressed you ; it was unintentionally ; and what I said was only from the first impulse of my feelings—but indeed, Valoria, you ought not to have given my mother a promise so inimical to my every hope of felicity."—And now, with all the eloquence that love could teach, Octavian sought to convince her, that a promise

given to the Marchesa, in a moment when her heart was softened by her maternal distress, could not be binding, as it was extorted from her; but Valoria was not to be lured by those delusive arguments, from what her reason told her was right; and Octavian soon after quitted her, despairing of convincing her, and almost angry at what he termed her inflexibility. As soon as he was gone, our heroine hastened to her chamber, and flinging herself upon the bed in her cloaths, fatigue and want of rest overcame the uneasiness of her mind, and in sleep she lost the recollection of her sorrows.

The following day Valoria received a note from the Marchese di Veroni; desiring her to be at the villa at seven o'clock, as he wanted to have some conversation with her. Though excessively surprized at this summons, from the father of Octavian, she determined to obey it;

and at the appointed hour she set out on her walk to the villa.

Pale, trembling, and agitated by various emotions, Valoria was ushered into a magnificent drawing-room, where the Marchese di Veroni, and several strangers were assembled. Shrinking from the scrutinizing looks which were directed to her, she stood with her eyes bent upon the ground, when the audible whisper of a lady, to another who sat beside her, met her ear.

“And so,” she exclaimed, “this is the creature for whom the Lady Lucillia is rejected!—To be sure she is passable; but Signor Octavian must have a strange taste, to prefer such an every-day face to the matchless young Duchess’s.”

These words, and the contemptuous tone in which they were uttered, at once

recalled the sinking spirits of Valoria, and turning to the Marchese, she addressed him in a firm yet respectful manner. "I am come, my Lord, according to your orders. May I be honoured by your Lordship's commands."

The Marchese started, as if he was now first sensible of her presence, as he replied; "Pardon me Signora, I did not see you before.—I sent for you here," he continued, "to learn your final determination in regard to my son. It is my wish to conduct myself towards you with moderation, and lenity, since you must be convinced I have no occasion to sue, where I have authority to command, and power to enforce obedience; and you need not be told there are many ways to remove a destitute young creature, who is the cause of uneasiness to a noble family—a convent for example."

“ I know it, my Lord,” returned Valoria calmly, “ and my fate is to me such an object of indifference, it is immaterial where I spend the remainder of my existence. Your Lordship may be assured I am not to be terrified into any measure.—Despair knows no fear; and if a sense of principle cannot induce me to act rightly, threats will have no influence on a heart whose dearest hopes are annihilated.”

“ Your language is strong, young lady,” replied the Marchese in a tone of mingled surprize and anger: “ and methinks it is not very respectful, considering the person you address.”

“ Pardon me, my Lord,” exclaimed Valoria with emotion; “ a disrespectful expression could never pass my lips to the father of Signor Octavian.—I wait in expectation of your Lordship’s commands.”

"My commands, then," replied the Marchese, "are, that you immediately release Octavian from the vows he has made you—that you declare every engagement between you to be dissolved; and that you swear, in the presence of my friends here, never to become his wife without my entire approbation and consent."

"It is already done, my Lord," replied Valoria in faint and hurried accents. "A few days since the Marchese^a honoured me by a visit, and I then promised her to be guided in my future conduct to Signor Octavian, by the wishes of his family."

"And did you consider that promise as sacred?"

"Certainly my Lord. No threats of violence, no unkind language was used, to extort it from me. It was a voluntary

tribute paid by my reason to the convincing arguments of the Marchesa; and never will I recede from it."

"In that case," said the Marchese, "you can have no objection to confirm your promise in the presence of myself and my friends, who, from their connexion with the Lady Lucillia, are particularly interested in this affair; and here," continued he, glancing towards the window, "comes my son himself, to be a witness of your decision in regard to him."

Valoria's heart throbbed convulsively, as she anticipated the ensuing scene. No one had yet asked her to be seated, and her unobtrusive humility had prevented her from taking a chair herself. Trembling, and almost unable to stand, she now leaned for support against a window-seat, with her eyes intently fixed upon the door, in expectation of Octavian's ap-

pearance. He at length entered, accompanied by a gentleman and two ladies, one of whom hung upon his arm: and in the beauty of her face, the majesty of her figure, and the proud hauteur of her whole deportment, she instantly recognized the Lady Lucillia. At the sight of Valoria, Octavian started and grew pale; but when he perceived her agitated, and ready to faint, he could no longer controul his emotions—advancing rapidly towards her, he exclaimed, with a look and tone of the most pathetic tenderness, “Valoria, my life, what ails you?” Why are you thus pale, thus agitated?”

The language of affection completely subdued the sinking spirits of our heroine, and bursting into tears, she sobbed convulsively. “By Heaven!” exclaimed Octavian, “it is so; you have been insulted—but think not I will passively submit to see it. My disposition can bear

a great deal, but never *that*.” —“ Octavian,” she whispered, “ you are mistaken; I have not been insulted, and am persuaded the Marchese and his friends have no intentions of that nature.”

Somewhat satisfied by this assurance, Octavian now presented our heroine a chair, and the voice of his father loudly calling to him he left her, and hastened to the Marchese, who led him to a window in a distant part of the room, where they remained some time in earnest conversation. The Lady Lucillia now left the apartment with another lady; and in a state of direful agitation, Valoria passed this dreadful interval, which was to decide her fate. Octavian at length turned round, distraction was in his air, and approaching our heroine, he exclaimed in a frantic accent: “ Valoria, beware; beware what you are doing—Let not a false notion of rectitude induce you to plunge

us both into destruction.—If ever I was dear to you, if you would save me from everlasting misery, reflect yet a moment, ere you irrevocably seal my doom !”

Valoria attempted to speak, but the words died upon her lips ; and the Marchese advancing to her, took her hand, and led her to a table at the other side of the room. “ My Lord,” he exclaimed, addressing an elderly gentleman of noble deportment, who, reclining on a sofa, (had been a silent observer of the scene before him) “ My Lord, will your Grace favour us with your presence here for a moment ?”

The stranger approached the table, while Valoria, leaning on the Marchese’s arm, (for without his aid she must have fallen) stood pale and motionless as a marble statue, with her eyes bent on the countenance of Octavian ; who, snatch-

ing her disengaged hand, wildly articulated, "Valoria, my life! my love! do not, do not relinquish me!—think yet a moment ere you proceed!"

"Silence, Sir," exclaimed the Marchese sternly. "Signora," he added, addressing Valoria, "you have gone too far to recall your word—do you here, in the presence of the Duca de Alcarino, release my son from his engagements to you, and solemnly promise never to become his clandestinely? Answer me; and answer me without equivocation."

"I do, my Lord," returned Valoria in faint and faltering accents. "Voluntarily do I release Signor Octavian from every promise, every engagement to me; and here I vow in the presence of Heaven, never to be his wife, without your Lordship's consent."—"Wretched Veroni!—Cruel, cruel Valoria!" exclaimed

Octavian, as in a state of frenzy, he rushed from the apartment.

Valoria spoke not ; no tears fell from her eyes ; no sigh heaved her bosom ; silent and motionless she sat, and, but that she breathed, shewed no sign of existence.—Softened by her despair, the Marchese hastened to a sideboard, and brought her a glass of wine, which she eagerly swallowed, to save her from fainting ; her tears now flowed freely, and somewhat revived she arose, and after thanking the Marchese for his politeness, curtsied to the rest of the company, and quitted the room.

In crossing the hall, Valoria was met by Claudio who caught her hand as he exclaimed : “ Pardon the liberty I take, Signora ; but oh, my master, my dear master ! ”

“What of Signor Octavian,” returned Valoria in the low subdued tones of terror and alarm, “has any misfortune befallen him?”—“Heaven forbid, Signora,” he replied, “but my Lord is in such a state of mind, I tremble for the consequences—Oh that you would go to him, you might perhaps say something to compose him.”

“Where is your master, Claudio?” demanded our heroine; and on being informed that he had walked towards the lake, she instantly darted from the house, and took the path that led hither. The night was dark and gloomy, heavy clouds obscured the lustre of the moon, and an autumnal wind swept mournfully along the sky, and scattered the withered leaves around her. But the war of contending elements would at that moment have been unregarded by Valoria, as with the hurrying step of despair she flew across the park. On reaching the lake, she beheld

Octavian, with folded arm and unequal pace, traversing its margin. Cautiously and unseen she glided among the trees, till she gained the spot where he stood, and stationing herself behind him, she continued to watch his motions with acute anxiety. Suddenly he paused, with his eyes intently fixed on the dark bosom of the water, and striking his hand with violence against his forehead, he exclaimed: "The thought is madness; why can I not for ever bury the recollection of it beneath yon whelming wave?"

"Octavian," softly articulated Valoria, as she gently laid her hand on his shoulder: he started, and turning round with quickness exclaimed, in a gloomy tone: "Ah! Valoria, is it you; what brings you hither?—Leave me; in mercy leave me, lest in the bitterness of despair I curse myself and you."

"Curse *me* then only, Octavian," she replied in a voice of mingled grief and tenderness; for I have been your curse, the bane of your peace and happiness:—but tell me not to leave you till my voice has spoken comfort to your distracted soul."

"Never!" returned Octavian mournfully: "the blow is struck, and nought on earth can heal the wounds of my heart!—Even thy voice of magic, Valoria, has lost its soothing powers—it now sounds direfully in my ears, like the knell of my departed joys.—Once more, then, I conjure you to leave me."

"Then ere we part for ever, Octavian," exclaimed Valoria, "say that you forgive me for all the misery I have ever caused you!—Oh, in pity to the pangs of my almost broken heart, say that you do not hate me; and believe me, Octavian, did

you know the agony that rent my soul, when forced to obey the stern voice of duty, you would not add to my wretchedness by your reproaches.—Compassionate, then, the poor victim of her ruthless destiny ; and when far removed from the sole object for whom I would exist, the remainder of my life shall be passed in prayer for the happiness of thine."

" My happiness !" wildly exclaimed Octavian. In the grave only shall I find it ; and there," he added, gloomily pointing to the lake, " behold mine."

" Then I must share it with you, Octavian," returned Valoria, " if you are thus resolved ; for never could I survive to bear your father's curses—your mother's tears."

" Am I then indeed so dear to

you, Valoria?" inquired the agitated youth, "that if you could not save me, you would brave death for my sake?"

"Are you dear to me!" exclaimed our heroine. "Oh! Octavian."—The pathos, the tone of exquisite tenderness with which she uttered these words, vibrated on every cord of feeling in Octavian's heart.—Unable to controul his emotions, he caught her to his breast, and his fast falling tears dropped on her pallid cheek.—A silence of some moments succeeded, for Octavian was too much agitated to speak; and Valoria, who hailed his tears as a symptom of returning composure, feared to interrupt the solemn pause.

CHAPTER VIII.

—— By all that I have seen,
Have read, or heard, in life or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.
SHAKSPEARE.

OCTAVIAN at length started from his reverie, and gently releasing Valoria from his embrace, he flung himself at her feet, exclaiming, "Forgive me, beloved Valoria, if I have said any thing to distress you!—I ought not to accuse you; for well I am assured, no motive but my happiness influenced your late conduct, which you was taught to believe would be promoted by the step you have just taken.—All the powers of force and persecution were leagued against you; and your gentle tortured heart yielded at

length to their united influence.—Yet, though you renounced him, Octavian is still dear to you, and no power on earth shall ever obtain my concurrence to the fatal promise extorted from you; and my unalterable resolution shall at length compel the haughty Marchese to grant his consent to a union with my Valoria, rather than behold his so highly valued family extinct, in the person of his only son.”

The clock from the villa now struck nine, and Octavian, fearful that our heroine should catch cold, from remaining any longer in the damps, insisted on her immediately returning home, and took her arm to accompany her.

“Dear Octavian!” exclaimed Valoria, “do not, I intreat you, think of walking home with me; it would only

excite the Marchese's anger, should he hear of it."

"Do you imagine, then," returned Octavian, "that I shall suffer you to go thus late by yourself? Do, pray, permit me," he added in a tone of supplicating tenderness; and Valoria, whose spirits were unequal to any altercation, no longer opposing it, they proceeded on their way to the cottage. The walk was a silent one; for Valoria's heart, oppressed with the deepest despondence, she was but little disposed for conversation; and Octavian, fully occupied by his reflections, did not attempt to interrupt her taciturnity.

On reaching the fisherman's, he again tenderly embraced her, as he exclaimed: "Heaven bless you, my life, till we meet again!—Good night to you; and in your dreams remember Octavian!"

"God bless you, my dear friend!" returned Valoria in a melancholy accent; and with tearful eyes she continued to watch his receding figure, till he disappeared behind a projecting cliff; when, sad and desponding, she entered the cottage, where she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears. A mournful presentiment dwelt upon her mind, that she should see Veroni no more. In vain she sought to banish this idea; in spite of her endeavours it recurred perpetually, and she passed the night in sleepless agitation, and a vain attempt to obtain tranquillity.

Valoria had scarcely breakfasted the next morning, when the sound of a carriage announced the arrival of a visitor. With a palpitating heart she awaited the approach of her guest, when the door opened, and she was clasped in the arms of the Marchesa di Veroni. As soon as the first salutations were over, the Mar-

chessa seated herself by her young friend, as she tenderly said, " You are no doubt, my dear girl, surprized at this unexpected, visit ; but my errand to you was of too much importance to admit of any delay, and I therefore determined to run the risk of your being at home, and this was my principal motive in coming so early. I have been informed," continued the Marchesa, " of the events of yesterday ; and from my soul do I pity the conflict you must have had to sustain. Sorry, however, am I to say, that as Octavian is as averse as ever to his father's wishes, the Marchese considers it necessary that you should leave this neighbourhood directly ; and as he has had the goodness to let me conduct the affair as I think proper, I came hither to consult you on the plan I have formed for your future welfare."

You are too good, dearest Madam !"

exclaimed Valoria, raising the Marchesa's hand to her lips.

"Not at all, my dear. I owe you some return for the ready acquiescence you have paid to my representations; and when I promised to be a mother to you, it was my intention faithfully to fulfil my word. After what has passed, Valoria," continued the Marchesa, "a longer residence here cannot be desirable to you, since here you are continually liable to meet Octavian, and the woman who is destined to become his wife, which can only serve to revive remembrances that had better be forgotten. For your sake, therefore, my dear, as well as for my son's, I wish to remove you from hence; and I think I know you too well to doubt your concurrence on this point."

"I am your's, madam," returned Valoria with emotion. "Dispose of me as

you please ; I submit myself entirely to your directions."

The Marchesa embraced her tenderly—
" Believe me, Valoria," she exclaimed,
" you shall have no cause to repent this confidence in my regard for you ; and though I cannot personally afford you my protection, I will secure you a safe and honourable asylum. Assured of your compliance with my wishes, I have written to an old and valued friend, the Contessa Reveldi, informing her of my present embarrassment, and entreating her, as a proof of her regard for me, to receive and protect you. I am under no apprehension for her answer, as she has long been requesting me to find her a young companion, whose society and accomplishments might cheer her solitary hours ; for she is a widow, and has no natural relation on whose tenderness and attention she has any claim. Under her

roof, Valoria, you will find a secure asylum, such as your youth, your beauty, and your unprotected situation demand. In her society, and in the scenes of gaiety to which she will introduce you, your spirits will be relieved, and you will find in your renewed tranquillity, a reward for the sacrifice you have made to the peace of my family."

"Oh, Marchesa! dear excellent friend!" exclaimed Valoria, in a transport of gratitude, and falling at her feet—"how can I ever express my sense of your unparalleled goodness to me!"

"By endeavouring to be happy," returned the Marchesa, raising and embracing her. "And now, Valoria," she added, "there is one point to which you must strictly adhere. Your departure from hence must be unknown to Octavian; and, to prevent any discovery of your fu-

ture residence, it is requisite that you should change your name, since that of Valoria alone would be too conspicuous."

It was impossible for our heroine to refuse her acquiescence to any proposal of the Marchesa's, who after some deliberation, determined that she should assume the appellation of Signora di Valenti, the name of a distant branch of her own family. "And now, my dear," said this most amiable woman, rising from her seat, "I must leave you. To-morrow morning I expect the final answer of the Contessa, when I hope to see you at the villa, by twelve o'clock, as at that hour my son and the Marchese will be engaged in a party of pleasure with their guests, and we can then arrange every thing in respect to your journey."

Valoria promised to come to the villa at the appointed hour, and the Marchesa

tenderly bade her farewell, and hastened to her carriage, leaving our heroine overpowered with mingled emotions of gratitude and grief.—Of gratitude for the unequalled goodness of the Marchesa; and grief, from a conviction that she was now indeed separated from Octavian for ever.—It was true she had before relinquished every expectation of being his; yet still her heart had retained a latent hope, which was now torn violently from it; and, melancholy and desponding, she wept bitterly at the idea of never again beholding the object of her tenderest affections.

The following morning Valoria hastened to pay, what she firmly believed would be her last visit at the villa. A heavy depression weighed upon her heart, yet she endeavoured to assume the appearance of tranquillity; and a sweet, though mournful smile, played upon her

lips, as she entered the boudoir of the Marchesa. Her amiable benefactress was alone, and rising from a sofa on which she reclined, she tenderly kissed Valoria as she thanked her for being so punctual to her appointment: then, seating her by her side, she proceeded to inform her, "that she had just received an answer from the Contessa Reveldi, who had joyfully acceded to her request, and intreated that her young companion might set out as soon as possible for Rome, where she was impatiently expecting her. So if you have no objection, my dear," continued the Marchesa, "your journey shall commence to-morrow morning; and, as it must be kept a profound secret from your host and his family, it must be conducted with the greatest caution and privacy."

"In whatever way you think proper,

dearest Madam," returned Valoria, "it shall be done."

"Well then," resumed the Marchesa, "a servant on whose fidelity I can depend, shall be waiting for you with a chaise, in the lane leading to the cottage, as soon as it is light; he shall convey you to Naples, where the Contessa has promised to send her own carriage, and a trusty domestic, to escort you to her. Do you approve of this plan for your departure?"

"Do I!" exclaimed Valoria with emotion: "Can I do otherwise, when it is the Marchesa di Veroni who proposes it?"

"We have then," she returned, "only one more arrangement to make, your compliance with which will afford me infinite pleasure. It is," continued the Marchesa, taking a pocket-book from the ta-

ble, and presenting it to Valoria ; “ that you will accept the contents of this, to renew your wardrobe, and when it is exhausted, the Contessa Reveldi will replenish it at my request.”

Overcome by excess of gratitude, our heroine flung herself at the feet of her benefactress, unable to articulate a single word ; and taking her hands, she pressed them to her heart, to her lips, and bathed them with tears of genuine sensibility. The Marchesa raised, and entreated her to be composed ; and when, restored to the powers of language, she attempted to express the glowing feelings of her grateful heart, she gently silenced her, as she said, “ No thanks, my dear girl, I entreat you. Whatever I have done, is only a just recompence for your own conduct ; and, as my adopted daughter, it is my desire that you should make an appearance suitable to that title.” And now, with

the most delicate consideration for the emotions of her young friend, the Marchesa turned the conversation to the Contessa Reveldi; and so much was Valoria pleased with the accounts she heard of her character, manners, and stile of living, that if her heart had at that moment been capable of feeling happiness, it would have been in the assurance that she was to be placed under the protection of such a woman.

After sitting near an hour with her benefactress, and partaking of some refreshments, Valoria took her leave. At parting, the Marchesa affectionately embraced her, and drawing a ring from her finger, presented it to the lovely creature as a memento of her friendship, promising at the same time to write to her frequently. With swimming eyes Valoria kissed her hand, as she exclaimed: "Farewell, my dear, my venerated benefactress!—Permit

me once more to express my gratitude for all your goodness, and to pray for every blessing and happiness on yourself and your noble family."—"The same attend you, my sweet girl," returned the Marchesa: "remember my injunctions, and endeavour to be happy." Valoria smiled mournfully in reply, and again bidding the Marchesa adieu, hastened from the apartment.

As the road through the wilderness was much shorter than that by the park, she resolved to go that way, as well as from a wish to behold once more the spot where she had first seen Octavius. The emotions of our heroine, as she lingered in each well-known beloved walk, were indescribable: but when at length she reached the bower, her feelings became too tumultuous to be controuled; and sinking on her knees on the mossy turf, she hid her face in the thick foliage, and

wetted it with her tears.—All the hours of happiness she had passed in the society of Octavian recurred to her recollection; and the idea of an eternal separation struck, in its fullest force, to her heart. For some moments Valoria continued to indulge her feelings unrestrained, when, conscious that it could only serve to weaken her already sinking fortitude, she wiped away her tears, and folding her snowy arms together, she implored of Heaven to endue her with resignation to support her destiny, and to shower down every blessing on her beloved Octavian. Her mind composed and strengthened by these effusions of piety, she arose from her knees, and snatching a branch of musk roses which were still in bloom, she placed them in her bosom and hastened from the wilderness. The remainder of the day was passed by Valoria in preparations for her intended journey.

From the small wardrobe she had at the cottage she selected the most valuable articles, and making the rest of it into a parcel, she directed it to Nanine, for whom she likewise inclosed a liberal present, as a remuneration for her kindness. Her drawings, likewise, she left at the cottage; but her harp, precious to her as the gift of Octavian, she resolved to carry with her, and accordingly packed it up for that purpose.

Sleep visited not the eyes of Valoria that night, and at the first dawn of day she quitted her pillow, and cautiously stealing from the cottage of Jacomo, she bent her steps to the lane; where, according to the Marchesa's promise, she found a carriage in readiness to receive her. The door was instantly opened by the driver, who respectfully assisted her to get in; and while he fastened her trunk behind, Valoria put her head through the chaise

window, to behold once more the humble abode which had so long sheltered her. Its white chimneys appeared among the tall trees which environed it, and the beams of a waning moon glistened brightly on her chamber window. The hours of happiness she had passed beneath its roof, in the society of him from whom she was for ever torn; his love, his tenderness, which sought, by a thousand nameless attentions, to promote her felicity, all recurred to Valoria's memory; and with it the direful conviction of what would be his anguish when he found she was gone without even bidding him adieu. This last idea completely overcame her fortitude, and sinking back on the seat, she became insensible to all around her. The motion of the carriage restored her faculties, and as it rapidly proceeded along the road, her eye caught a view of the villa, and the surrounding woods. Her tears flowed in abundance at the sight

of this, to her, interesting object; and, relieved by this indulgence of her feelings, she became more composed, and with an assumed calmness, she mournfully resigned herself to her destiny.

The charms of a most beautiful country, through which she passed, and which, though in the decline of the year, presented numberless attractions, served in some measure to lure the mind of Valoria from the contemplation of her own sorrows; and on her arrival at Naples, she found the Contessa's carriage waiting for her, with an elderly woman, who had been appointed by her lady to attend her in the remainder of her journey.

To the languid spirits of Valoria, a companion, whose conversation would sometimes beguile her of her thoughts, and to whom she might communicate her remarks as she went along, was a salutary

relief; and before she had been many hours in her society, she was much pleased with her new acquaintance, who, to a sensible, well-informed mind, united very agreeable manners. Perceiving the melancholy of her beauteous charge, her companion sought to enliven and amuse her, by relating various anecdotes of the Contessa Reveldi, to which Valoria listened with pleasure, as they confirmed what she had before heard from the Marchesa, of her amiable character. Nothing of moment occurred during the rest of their journey; our travellers arrived without any accident at Rome, and immediately hastened to the Contessa's hotel.

With a palpitating heart our heroine ascended to the drawing-room, the door of which was flung open, and the next moment she found herself in the presence of the Contessa Reveldi, a venerable and majestic looking woman about fifty; who,

taking the hand of the timid girl, led her forward, as, in a voice of the sweetest urbanity, she welcomed her to Rome. Re-assured by the gentle and conciliating manners of her new protectress, Valoria soon felt herself perfectly at ease in her society; they conversed cheerfully on various topics till supper, and shortly after the Contessa conducted our heroine to a magnificent apartment, prepared for her reception; where, kindly bidding her a good night, and desiring her to sleep well after her journey, she left her to her repose.

Fatigue procured for our heroine a night of undisturbed repose, and she awoke not next morning, till a pretty and modest looking girl entered her apartment, who had been sent by the Contessa to assist her in dressing. Though accustomed for some time past to wait entirely on herself, Valoria did not refuse this mark

of attention, and in a few minutes she was ready to descend to the Contessa's boudoir, who she found already seated at the breakfast-table, and who now, with the most winning kindness, inquired after her health, and if she had rested well. Valoria returned a suitable answer to these questions; and the conversation turned to the events of her journey, and the curiosities of the places she had passed through, which she described to her attentive hearer in the sweet unaffected language of modesty. As soon as the repast was over, the Contessa ordered her carriage, and accompanied Valoria in an expedition to make purchases.

Assisted by the judgment and taste of her friend, our heroine soon found herself in possession of an elegant wardrobe, to which the Contessa added a set of beautiful ornaments in pearl, as a present from herself; and in the artless expressions of

her gratitude, she experienced an ample reward for her kindness. It was late when they returned home, and during the remainder of the day, Valoria sought, by the most cheerful and fascinating conversation, to entertain her amiable protectress; who, charmed before by her manners, now began to feel a real sentiment of regard towards her.

For some days after our heroine's arrival at Rome, she continued almost entirely alone with the Contessa; and in this interval of uninterrupted intercourse, they acquired a greater knowledge of each other's character, than they could have obtained in a year's acquaintance in fashionable life. To all those virtues which best adorn the heart of a female, the Contessa united a sensible and intelligent mind, and an understanding which had received all the cultivation the most liberal education could bestow. Her taste

in the fine arts was refined and elegant; she consequently was calculated to form a correct judgment of the perfection of others; and, possessed of an independent and very handsome fortune, she was ever a liberal patroness of genius. Revered for her benevolence, admired for her talents, her house was the temple of taste and refinement, where a small but select society assembled, to amuse themselves and their amiable hostess; and so cheerful and engaging were her manners: so much did she still retain of the vivacity of her youth, that the young and gay courted her society, and were ambitious to be ranked among those she honoured by her esteem and friendship.

Such was the woman to whose care the Marchesa di Veroni had committed our heroine; and if she revered and venerated her protectress, the Contessa was no less delighted with Valoria. The beauty of

her person, the sweetness of her manners, had at the first interview made a very favourable impression upon the Contessa's mind; and when to these she found united the most elegant accomplishments, with the most unaffected humility, and a heart and disposition formed to command love and esteem from every being of sensibility, her admiration soon ripened into the tenderest affection; and, destitute of any relation who had a natural claim on her tenderness, Valoria, shortly became as dear to her as if she had been her own child.

Though our heroine assumed in her manners an appearance of cheerfulness, sadness was visible in the touching expression of her countenance, and in the plaintive tones of her voice; and, eager to steal her from an indulgence of fruitless sorrow, the Contessa now carried her to every place of public amusement, and introduced her into the society of her friends.

Valoria was not one of those beings who, because they have met with disappointment in a cherished prospect of felicity, reject, as unworthy of regard, every other means of happiness that are still in their power. Her heart, deeply impressed by the goodness of Heaven, in raising up for her such a protector, and full of gratitude to the Contessa for her kindness, endeavoured to express it, by seeking to appear pleased with her attempts to render her happy; and though her heart mourned unceasingly her ravished hopes, the smile of cheerfulness played on her lips, and she entered with spirit and readiness into the pursuits and amusements of her benefactress.

In the scene of life in which she was now placed, the beauty and accomplishments of Valoria could not fail of attracting general admiration. The Contessa, who doated upon her, beheld with delight

the attention her protégée excited wherever she appeared, in the hope that her charms and virtues might obtain her a splendid alliance, notwithstanding the mystery attached to her birth; secretly determined, if fortune should be the only impediment to her felicity, to supply the deficiency to the utmost of her power.

One evening Valoria and the Contessa went to the opera. The performance, which was uncommonly brilliant, entirely engrossed our heroine's attention for some time; when it was called off by a noise in the adjoining box; and turning round to discover the cause, she beheld a gentleman earnestly gazing upon her; his features seemed familiar to her recollection; but before she could obtain a second glance, he suddenly quitted the place where he sat, and entering the box in which was Valoria and her party, she instantly recognized Julio de Orsino.

Surprise prevented our heroine from speaking, as hastily advancing to her, he exclaimed: "Do my eyes deceive me, or is this the Signora Valoria that I behold?"

Valoria answered in the affirmative; and she extended her hand to him, which he pressed to his lips, as the Contessa, who had observed his entrance, and his notice of her protégée, advanced to them. Julio bowed, as he said, "Have I not the honour of addressing the Contessa Reveldi?"

"Conte d'Albini, if I mistake not," she replied. "I did not before know that you were acquainted with Signora Valoria."

"D'Albini! dear Madam," exclaimed Valoria in surprise: "this gentleman is the Signor Orsino, with whom I became

acquainted in Sicily, when I resided with Signor Montaldi."

"Pardon, my amiable friend," interrupted Julio, "the embarrassment I have caused you; when I had the happiness of seeing you in Sicily, I was the Signor Orsino; the Contessa has only known me since I became Conte d'Albini. Permit me now," he added, "to inquire after Signor Montaldi, and your lovely friend the Lady Eugenia, and her sweet little boy."

Valoria was unable to reply—the image of her murdered friend, and the recollection of her untimely fate, recalled thus forcibly to her mind, entirely overcame her; and bursting into tears, she hid her face with her handkerchief.—Shocked at the emotions he had excited, Julio gently took her hand as he said—"Pardon my inadvertence, Signora, I conjure you. I had not the most remote idea of distress-

ing you thus, or nothing should have led me to make the inquiry."

The Contessa, who had been for some time in Valoria's confidence, now drew the Conte aside, as she explained to him the cause of her emotion; and from the conversation that ensued, Valoria learnt that Julio had succeeded to the family title and estate, by the death of his only brother, and that he was now at Rome on a visit to the Dowager Contessa d'Albini, who was an intimate friend of her protectress. Montaldi he had never seen since his visit at the Castle del Retirero, and was consequently ignorant of the events which had occurred there. For the death of Eugenia, though unacquainted with the manner of it, he expressed the greatest concern; while the present safe and honourable situation of Valoria was to him a source of unfeigned satisfaction.

The opera being now ended, the Contessa invited d'Albini to return home with her to supper, which he readily accepted; and Valoria, in conversing with her old acquaintance, for whom she entertained the greatest esteem, gradually recovered her spirits, which the painful recollections his presence at first excited had depressed; nor did he retire without a pressing invitation from the Contessa to visit the Hotel de Reveldi, as often as he should find it agreeable, and promising him to call on his mother the following morning.

As soon as breakfast was over, the Contessa ordered her carriage, and accompanied by Valoria set out on her intended visit. D'Albini who was anxiously waiting their arrival, received them in the hall, and immediately conducted them to his mother. Her reception of the Contessa was that of an old and valued friend; of Valoria polite, and flattering; and so

urgent were her invitations for them to dine with her, that she quickly overcame the Contessa's objections, who accordingly sent home her carriage, and consented to spend the rest of the day with her friend.

While they were engaged in earnest discourse, Julio drew Valoria upon the terrace, where in conversing on various topics the time passed rapidly away, till they received a summons to dinner. On entering the saloon, Valoria found a large party assembled, to whom she was introduced as the protégée of the Contessa Reveldi, and placed at the table by the side of d'Albini, whose whole attention during the repast were directed to our heroine, by whom they were placed to the account of the friendship that had formerly existed between them. When dinner was over, the guests adjourned to the concert room, where they amused themselves according to their inclinations, with conversation or

music. Valoria, seated by a piano, on which a young lady was playing, listened with earnest and delighted attention to the performance; and when she had ceased, d'Albini drawing a harp towards our heroine, intreated her to play. Valoria hesitated, for her natural timidity made her unwilling to display her talents before so many strangers; but an imploring look from the Contessa de Reveldi conquered her irresolution. With a light, though tremulous hand, she ran over the chords, and after a lively symphony, she changed her measure, and began an air so soft, so plaintive, so exquisitely sweet, that it seemed rather the strain of a celestial being, than the mere effects of mortal skill. The notes she breathed were from her heart, for Octavian himself had taught her them; they thrilled to the soul of her auditors, and when she ceased, a burst of rapturous applause declared how much they had been charmed. Deeply blushing

at the admiration she had excited, Valoria arose from the instrument, and gracefully courtesying her acknowledgments, withdrew to another part of the room ; where with Julio, and a few others, she sat alternately conversing, or listening to the music, when her attention was entirely engrossed by the repetition of a name which vibrated through her heart.

“ It is very true,” returned a lady who sat behind her, in answer to something her companion had said, “ that Signor Octavian was at first extremely averse to this union ; his objection is supposed to have originated in an attachment to an artful girl who resided near the villa, and who had obtained so great an influence over him, that his friends were really apprehensive that he intended to marry her. She has been, however, wisely removed from his pursuit, and he is now, I find, so much reconciled to his approaching

union, that it is supposed it will take place as soon as Lady Lucillia's family are out of mourning for her aunt."

Valoria had scarcely breathed during this conversation: she now became sick and faint; and d'Albini, alarmed at the deadly paleness of her countenance, eagerly inquired if she was ill?

"It is nothing," she replied falteringly, "but a sudden faintness, which the air will instantly remove; and d'Albini, and a young lady who stood near her, taking each one of her hands, led her between them to the terrace. The freshness of the breeze soon revived Valoria, and sitting down in a garden chair, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept violently. Her tears restored her faculties, and after indulging them for some minutes, she returned to her companions, and assuring them she was per-

feetly recovered, expressed a wish to return to the concert room. Her request was immediately complied with; but Valoria's spirits were completely gone, and leaning with her arm against a piano, she fell into a train of melancholy reflections.

"Wherefore," she asked herself, "should she be thus affected by the mention of Octavian's approaching marriage, since it was nothing more than she had reason to expect, and which her departure had been intended to accelerate?—Any hope for herself she could not possibly retain. Yet, whispered her throbbing heart, was it consistent with Octavian's ardent love for her, to consent thus cheerfully, as she had heard he did, to an union with another? Her reason, however, told her she ought to rejoice in this willing acquiescence to an event which was inevitable, since his only chance of happiness depended on it." Conscious that it was her

duty to struggle against an unavailable despair, and fearful of attracting the observation of the Contessa Reveldi, Valoria called up all the powers of her mind, to assume the appearance of cheerfulness; and though painful was the effort, she at length succeeded, and joined in the amusements of the evening with apparent gaiety, while her heart was agonized by all the pangs disappointed tenderness and lost felicity could inspire.

In spite of her endeavours to conceal it, the sadness of Valoria for some days after her visit at the Contessa d'Albini's was so evident, as greatly to distress her benefactress, who in the tenderest manner intreated her to confide to her the cause of her unhappiness. Valoria's natural timidity, and a sentiment of delicacy, which prompted her to conceal from every one, that she was the victim of an unfortunate attachment, had hitherto prevented her

from revealing to the Contessa the affection she cherished for Octavian ; but the intreaties of this amiable friend, as with maternal tenderness she leaned over her, at once conquered her reluctance ; and flinging herself into her arms, she confided to her the cause of her distress. The Contessa, though grieved, was not surprised, for she had for some time suspected a mutual attachment between Octavian and her young friend : and now, with the most soothing gentleness, she represented to Valoria the necessity of overcoming a hopeless passion.

“ Octavian,” continued the Contessa, “ has already set you an example, as may be inferred from his ready acquiescence to his intended marriage ; and if he is indeed dear to you, you ought to rejoice in the victory he has obtained over himself, as a sure earnest of the happiness he may hereafter expect to enjoy.”

Valoria's reason had before told her so ; and she now assured her maternal friend of her exertions to conquer her affection. " And fear not, my dearest madam," she continued, " of my success ; as the husband of another, it will soon be criminal to love Octavian ; every sentiment of duty and delicacy will then urge me to forget him ; yet surely they cannot forbid me to remember him as a friend."

" Certainly not, my love," returned the Contessa embracing her ; " and may you find in the fraternal friendship of Octavian a reward for the sacrifices you have made to ensure his happiness !"

The communication she had made to the Contessa, while it relieved the heart of Valoria, had still more cemented her friend to it ; for when a timid and delicate mind has once surmounted the difficulty of unbosoming itself, the objects of its

confidence ever becomes dear to it. To the Contessa Valoria could now converse, without reserve, of all she felt and thought: and from the sensible advice, and soothing tenderness of her friend, she gradually obtained a sufficient fortitude to reflect upon the approaching marriage of Octavian, with a sort of melancholy resignation.

The Conte d'Albini was now a constant visitor at the Hotel de Reveldi, and soon became so great a favourite of the Contessa, that she could not help secretly indulging a hope, which originated in the attentions of Julio to our heroine, that a new attachment might supersede the one she had so long cherished for Octavian. Of d'Albini's honourable design she had no doubt; but as he had not as yet openly avowed his passion for Valoria, she forbore to mention to her a hope which might never be realized. The spring was

now far advanced, and the Contessa, who had for some weeks been rather indisposed, became anxious to be in the country, and accordingly accepted the pressing invitation of the Contessa d'Albini to pay her a visit, at her villa in the vicinity of Naples, before she went to her own estate in Tuscany; and it was consequently arranged, that the whole party should set out together, under the escort of Julio, the following morning.

The last evening they spent at Rome was dedicated to the opera, which had always been a favourite amusement of Valoria, and hither she went, accompanied by a numerous party. The entertainment was drawing to a conclusion, when a gentleman entered the box where she sat, and hastily advanced to d'Albini. The sound of his voice, as he addressed the Conte, electrified her every sense; fearfully she raised her eyes to his face; and on be-

holding Montaldi, sunk back with a piercing shriek, into the arms of a lady behind her.—All was now confusion.—

The Contessa in alarm flew to her darling, and every effort was used for her recovery,

They at length succeeded, and unclosing her eyes, she conjured the Contessa to take her immediately from hence. Mon-

taldi now approached her; when, almost deprived by terror of the use of her facul-

ties, Valoria sprung across the benches,

and opening the box-door, rushed into the passage, followed by Julio and the

Contessa, the latter of whom, in the most soothing tones of tenderness, conjured her to inform her of the cause of her alarm.

“Oh! Madam,” exclaimed our heroine in a hurried and inarticulate voice; “Save me, for God’s sake! from the Signor Montaldi.”

The Contessa now requested Julio to go in search of her carriage, and taking

Valoria's hand led her into a room appropriated for refreshments, and seating her on a sofa, presented her a glass of wine, which she insisted on her immediately drinking off. By the time she had swallowed it, the Conte d'Albini returned to tell them the carriage was ready, and took the arm of Valoria in his, to conduct her to it. In crossing the lobby, she again beheld Montaldi, in earnest conference with his servant Bernardo, whose countenance she well remembered.

The sight of Eugenia's murderer, Valoria was unable to support without trembling, but he did not now make any attempt to address her; and in a few moments she found herself in the Contessa's carriage, and safely placed by the side of her benefactress. On her arrival at home, our heroine immediately retired to bed, after taking an opiate to quiet the agitation of her nerves; but her dreams were

uneasy and harassing, and at the dawn of day she arose, and employed herself till breakfast in preparing for her journey.

As soon as the repast was over, the Contessa d'Albini and her son arrived, when the equipages being ready, the whole party commenced their journey. Nothing worthy of notice occurred during its continuance, and at the end of a few days they reached the villa of the Contessa d'Albini.

The morning after their arrival they received an invitation to a fête given by a lady in the neighbourhood, in honour of her son's birth day, and which was expected to be the most brilliant and splendid that had been seen for a long time. The Contessa, anxious that Valoria should appear to the best advantage, presided herself at her toilet; and the simple style of dress she chose for her, set off her ex-

quisite beauty in the highest degree. It was that of a peasant of Savoy: part of her rich auburn tresses hung in dishevelled luxuriance, on her bosom, and the rest confined in a silk net, was entwined with a wreath of vine leaves.

Thus habited, Valoria accompanied her friends to the villa, where the company being already assembled, the gardens, splendidly illuminated, were thrown open, and they proceeded hither, where every object conspired to enchant the eye and imagination. The stems of the trees were lighted by rows of lamps, intermingled with garlands of laurel, roses, and myrtle; and, with the moonlight, combined to produce an almost magical effect. Bands of music were placed in different parts, for the accommodation of the dancers, and a pavilion in one of the shrubberies, whose roof was of lattice-work interlaced with flowers, and illuminated by lamps.

of crystal, afforded a retreat to those who preferred cards or conversation.

The beauty of the scene before her, the perfume of oranges and other odoriferous plants, joined to the sweetness of the music, all conspired to exhilarate the spirits of Valoria, as leaning on the arm of Conte d'Albini, she strayed through the gardens.

A group of figures dancing beneath the shade of some larches, attracted their attention, when one of them advancing to Julio, politely requested him to join them. The latter looked at Valoria for her approbation, who perceived, in his animated countenance, what were his wishes, and unwilling to disappoint him, gave him her hand, and instantly made one in the set which had just formed. Every eye followed with admiration the movements of our heroine, as her sylphid form swam,

with the lightness of a gossamer, through the mazes of the dance; and, confused by the admiration she excited, and which was audibly expressed, Valoria sat down with a resolution not to dance again; and after taking some refreshment, she proceeded with d'Albini to the pavilion, where the Contessa Reveldi was.

On entering, she found her friend at cassino, with the Contessa d'Albini and several others; and taking the arm of Julio, she joined the groups who were promenading the building, sometimes pausing at the windows to hear the music—at others, conversing with such of their acquaintance as they happened to distinguish, in the numerous parties around them.

It was while engaged in the latter, that Valoria, accidentally raising her eyes to an opposite pillar, beheld leaning against

it, his arms folded across his breast, and earnestly regarding her, Octavian di Veroni!—She staggered, and would have fallen, (for Julio, a few moments before, had relinquished her arm, to go and speak to his mother) had not the object of her emotion sprang forward, and caught her ere she sank to the ground. At this moment d'Albini returned, and perceiving the situation of our heroine, quickly advancing to Octavian, exclaimed,—“ Permit me, Signor, to thank you for your politeness; but the duty of assisting this lady belongs to me.”

“ Allow me to inquire,” returned Veroni, in a tremulous voice, “ on what right your claim is founded?”

“ On that of being her protector, Signor,” replied d'Albini.

Octavian made no answer; and in-

stantly resigning his senseless burden to the Conte, hastily quitted the pavilion: In a few moments after his departure, Valoria revived, and intreated Julio to lead her into the gardens. He instantly obeyed, and after walking about for some time, they sat down on a bench, to look at a party of the dancers. A friend of d'Albini now advanced from the set, and earnestly requested them to join them; when Julio excused himself, by declaring that he could not possibly leave his companion, who had been much indisposed, and was only come out for the benefit of the air.

“ I insist upon not being any impediment to your amusement, Conte,” said Valoria, who, well acquainted with his passion for dancing, could not bear to prevent his enjoying a diversion, in which she had no spirits to share. “ I feel myself perfectly recovered, and shall go to

the Contessa, and perhaps amuse myself with a game at cards ; so do not let any consideration for me obstruct your pleasure."

" You are very good my lovely Valoria," returned d'Albini, " but indeed I cannot leave you."

" Nay, then," she replied, with affected playfulness, " I insist upon it ; and command you, as you dread my displeasure, to dance immediately."

" That is a penalty I dare not hazard," cried Julio, bowing, and instantly he advanced to the dancers, while Valoria arose, with an intention of returning to the pavilion ; in the hurry, however, of her mind, she turned into a wrong path, and after following its windings for some time, she found herself in a retired part of the plantations, and at some distance from the company. A seat placed beneath a

tenance, she sunk down on the bench, and covered her face with her hands.

“ Yes,” whispered her agonized heart, “ it is indeed so !—Octavian no longer loves me ; yet surely, surely, I do not merit this unkind, unfriendly conduct, from him.”

Drowned in tears, Valoria remained silent, when the voice of Veroni struck upon her ear, as he exclaimed vehemently, “ Villain !—infernal, accursed villain !”—She started, and drawing her hand from her eyes, beheld him standing before her, in an attitude of meditation, and gazing upon her with a gloomy and sorrowful air. At the sight of her tears his countenance softened, and flinging himself beside her, he took her hand, which she had not resolution to withdraw from him.—“ Valoria,” he at length articulated, “ little did I think we should ever meet thus.”

„ “ Would to God we never had !” she exclaimed, bursting into tears, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

“ Poor victim !” returned Octavian, in a melancholy tone, “ I pity thee—from my soul I pity thee ; and though you have undone me, though you have blasted my peace for ever, I would yet save thee from destruction. Let me implore you, in mercy to my anguish, to fly from your present situation. Rely on the honour of one who once loved you to distraction, and would still be your friend. Throw yourself on my protection, and I will instantly convey you to an asylum where you may enjoy all of peace and happiness you can ever hope for !”

Valoria remained silent, and for some moments doubted the evidence of her senses.—What could Octavian mean, almost the husband of Lucillia, by offering

her his protection? She paused—she shuddered!—the idea of an insult struck upon her heart; yet she recoiled from it, for it was not consistent with the character of Veroni; and as her promise to the Marchesa prevented her from communicating to him her real situation, she replied with firmness, though emotion: “Never, Signor Octavian, can I accept your offer.—No consideration on earth could induce me to quit my present asylum; for the being who affords me protection is inexpressibly dear to my heart, in whose sheltering arms I hope to pass the remainder of my existence.”

An expression of frenzy took possession of Octavian’s features, as he exclaimed, “Wretched, deluded girl!”—“you are then resolutely bent on your own destruction. “Yet oh!” he added, in a softened tone, “reflect one moment ere you decide.—You owe me some return, Valo-

ria, for peace, for health, and happiness destroyed.—Look at me now; the shadow of my former self—with a heart and constitution broken by sorrow, and do not deny me the last consolation it is in your power to bestow—that of beholding you under the protection I have myself chosen for you.”

“Octavian,” returned Valoria, weeping bitterly, “if my life could restore your happiness, I would this moment resign it; but I cannot accept your offer.—Gratitude and honour bind me to my present situation; nor could Octavian, if he was acquainted with it, wish me a better.”

Veroni looked incredulously, as he exclaimed: “Your sentiments may one day alter, Valoria; when remember you have a friend, whose arms and heart will ever be open to receive you.”—Again a

suspicion of his meaning flashed direfully across Valoria's brain, but she continued silent; when Octavian addressed her with an inquiry if he should conduct her to a more frequented part of the gardens?

Fearful of being seen with Octavian by the Contessa Reveldi, or any of his own party, Valoria faltered out a hesitating answer, of her expecting some friend in a few minutes. Veroni gazed earnestly upon her, and sighed deeply as he exclaimed, "Farewell, then, Valoria—an eternal farewell!—for in this world, most probably, we shall never meet again.—We part in amity, and as a proof of it, receive the last embrace of Octavian."—As he spoke, he drew her towards him; but Valoria's emotions became too powerful for her to sustain, and she fainted in his arms.—For a moment Octavian held her to his heart, while his tears fell fast on her cheek, as he articulated, "Lost Valoria! it is al-

most cruelty to wish thee to awake to the consciousness of a fate like thine!—How fair, how pale," he added, earnestly gazing upon her—"methinks she resembles a flower, blasted almost as soon as blown. Oh! death to my hopes, that it should indeed be so!"

A deep sigh from Valoria denoted her returning respiration; when fearful of trusting himself to hear the sound of her voice, or behold her tears, he once more folded her to his heart, as he exclaimed; "Adieu, Valoria! adieu my first, and only love!—May you yet be happy!—for myself, I shall never be so but in the grave."—Then hastily imprinting a kiss on her pallid cheek, he gently laid her upon the turf; and instantly disappeared in the thick shade which surrounded them.

On reviving, Valoria found herself

alone, and eagerly looked around in search of Octavian, but he was gone; and raising herself from the ground, she burst into a flood of tears. Relieved by excessive weeping, her recollection returned, and though with some difficulty, she at length succeeded in regaining the pavilion. Her absence, fortunately, had not been remarked; and being soon after joined by Conte d'Albini, a summons to supper called the company from the gardens, and they proceeded together to the saloon.

At the table where she sat, and almost opposite to her, Valoria again beheld Octavian, and by his side the Lady Lucilla, dressed in the most splendid style, and looking indeed most attractively beautiful. Veroni, during supper, carefully avoided meeting the eyes of our heroine, and with apparent cheerfulness directed his whole attentions to his destined bride,

by whom they were received with the most evident satisfaction. Valoria's heart sickened at the sight of her gay and happy rival; and with difficulty could she conceal her emotions from the observation of d'Albini, who was placed by her. The paleness of her countenance, and the tremulous agitation of her whole frame attracted his attention; and in a tone of the most anxious tenderness he inquired if she was ill? Valoria assured him she was only fatigued; but so great was the alarm with which her looks had inspired him, that she had some difficulty in persuading him that she was not seriously indisposed.

As soon as supper was over the company began to disperse; and as the evening was uncommonly fine, many of them had arranged to return by water. The Contessa d'Albini and her party were among the number; and it so happened

that the same boat they engaged was occupied by Octavian, Lucilia, and a few friends who had accompanied them. Though shocked and distressed at again meeting him, Valoria endeavoured to conquer the emotion this occurrence had caused her; and seated at the helm of the vessel, she remained silent, with her eyes intently fixed on the scene before her.

The distant spires and buildings of Naples, the ships in its harbour, the bold outline of the shore, adorned by innumerable villas and gardens, formed the enchanting prospect, softened by the mellow moon-beams that sparkled in the waves, and gilt the passing sails with silver. Groups of Neapolitans dancing on the beach, to their sweet national melody, composed the figures in this interesting landscape, whose beauties for some time entirely occupied the mind of Valoria, when she was recalled to a recollection of

the objects immediately surrounding her, by a proposal from one of the party, that such of them as were musical should exert their talents for the general amusement. This proposition met with universal approbation, and the gentleman who had promoted it, himself set the example, by taking up a French-horn, on which he played with equal taste and skill. When he had ceased, one of his companions amused the company in the same manner, on another instrument, when Julio advancing to Valoria, intreated her to sing; she at first hesitated in complying; but the earnest request of d'Albini, and her wish to conceal from Octavian the emotion his presence excited, overcame her reluctance, and she immediately sung the following sonnet, accompanied by Julio on the flute:

Dig me a grave beneath some spreading oak,
Adorned with flowers, and hid by waving grass;
Let no rude sculpture mark the lonely spot,
Nor start the timid wild deer as they pass.

What, tho' no holy rite, or mournful chaunt,
Shall sooth my parted spirit hovering near;
Yet viewless forms shall here delight to haunt,
And tender Pity sorrow o'er my bier.

And when the pale moon gilds my lowly bed,
Oft shall my Julia to the spot repair,
Unseen by vulgar eyes, her tears to shed,
And breathe her sorrows to the midnight air:
No other requiem shall my spirit crave,
And Julia's tears shall consecrate my grave.

When Valoria had finished, she was hailed by a murmur of applause from every one but Octavian, who leaning over the side of the vessel with his eyes fixed on the rippling waves, sat apparently insensible to all around him; when Lady Lucillia, who had been asked to sing, declared she could not, unless he would play for her, and now addressed him to that effect.—He started, and hastily turning to her, exclaimed: “Indeed, Lady Lucillia, you must excuse me, I am unwell, and quite unable to play.”

"Unwell!" she repeated; "why you was in very good health when you left home this morning."

"I certainly was better than I have been for some time," replied Octavian; "but the exertions of the day have again overpowered me; and your Ladyship must therefore pardon me for not complying with your request." Without waiting for an answer, Veroni covered his face with a handkerchief, and again resumed his former posture.

On their arrival at Naples, Lucillia aroused him from his reverie, by asking him if he would not land, as their carriage and servants were waiting for them on the quay. Octavian arose, and presented her his hand to conduct her from the boat. In passing Valoria, his handkerchief fell at her feet, and without stopping to pick it up, he rushed by her, and

in a few minutes she saw him enter his carriage and drive off. As soon as he was out of sight, she stooped and took up the handkerchief. It was still wet, and convinced her Octavian had been weeping almost all the time he had been in the boat. Involuntarily she pressed it to her heart, to her lips, and continued silent till the vessel reached the villa d'Albini, when they landed and proceeded directly to the house.

Valoria passed a sleepless night, as her mind dwelt on the occurrences of the preceding day. In vain did she attempt to account for the conduct of Octavian, which seemed to her inexplicable. What could he mean by offering her his protection, after he had declared he no longer loved her. That he was unhappy she could not doubt, since it was evident in every look and action; yet to her the cause was unaccountable, since his marriage

was no longer against his inclination. The more she reflected, the more strange did his conduct appear; and wearied by various conjectures, she at length gave up the attempt to divine his motives, with a resolution to conceal from every one the interview which had caused her so much anguish, and placed the character of Octavian in a very equivocal point of view.

With this determination, Valoria endeavoured to wear an air of serenity, the better to conceal from her friends the conflict in her mind; and though sadness the most touching was visible in her look, her voice, her manner, the Contessa Reveldi did not notice it to her, concluding it arose from so unexpectedly meeting with Octavian; and determined to prevent a repetition of the same circumstance, by removing in a few days from the villa of the Contessa d'Albini. The following morning, on entering her benefactress's

dressing-room, Valoria perceived in her an air of unusual seriousness, as she addressed her.

"I was just coming in search of you, my dear," said the Contessa, "as I have something of an important nature to communicate to you. The Conte d'Albini has been here, has avowed for you the most honourable passion, and intreated my kind office in his behalf. His mother has most generously waved every consideration of birth and fortune, in her regard for the happiness of her son, and both of them are equally anxious to have you become a member of their family."

"And you, Madam," returned Valoria in a tremulous voice; "what have you said to the Conte?"

"Nothing, my love, that need excite any alarm in you," said the Contessa

smiling. "I have promised d'Albini my best interest in his favour: but his destiny is in your hands."

"Ah, Madam," replied Valoria, "is that possible, when I have no authority over my own?—It is for my benefactors alone to dispose of me."

"No, Valoria," returned the Contessa tenderly: "think not I would force you to act contrary to your inclinations: you ought to have had a higher opinion of my affection for you, than to suppose it possible."

Valoria flung herself into the arms of her friend, without speaking, and burst into tears:—The Contessa embraced her as she exclaimed: "Ah, my child! I too well perceive the reason of your reluctance to accept the addresses of Conte d'Albini; your heart is still the prey to a hopeless

love, which if you give way to, will eventually destroy your peace, your health, and probably your existence. Believe me, Valoria, it is with diseases of the soul as with those of the body, those which are desperate, require a desperate remedy to effect their cure. You give way to a fatal sensibility because it affects no one but yourself, and there is no tie of duty to forbid the indulgence of it: but if you become the wife of d'Albini, your high sense of propriety will then aid your exertion to obtain a conquest over your former affections, and by so doing secure your happiness. Julio is young, rich, handsome, and generous, with a mind uncontaminated by vice, and virtues sufficient to form the felicity of any woman he may marry. Above all, he loves you with a sincere and disinterested affection. What reasonable objection can you then make to a union so every way advantageous? Nay, do not weep so piteously,

my love; you have no cause for distressing yourself; for worlds I would not compel you to marry any one you disliked. All I request of you is, that you will not entirely reject d'Albini, at least for the present; time may produce a revolution in his favour; and I have too good an opinion of my Valoria's understanding, to believe that she will wilfully embitter her whole life, by cherishing a passion which reason and her own happiness call upon her to subdue.

Valoria kissed the hand of her maternal friend with a look of mournful resignation, as she promised to comply with her request; and the Contessa now left her to her own reflections, which were soon interrupted by the entrance of d'Albini, who came to entreat her to walk with him. With some confusion she consented, and as they rambled along the gardens, Julio delicately turned the conversation to the

Contessa Reveldi ; and at length ventured to inquire if she had informed her of the application he had made to her that morning ? Valoria replied in the affirmative, when gently taking her hand, the Conte exclaimed in a faltering voice : “ And dare I ask, Valoria, what I may hope for from her communications ? ”

“ Valoria blushed, and hesitated ; but the natural ingenuousness of her mind made her shrink from the most distant idea of deceiving d’Albini ; after a short but severe struggle between her timidity and her sense of rectitude, she at length revealed to him every secret of her guileless heart, and concluded by an appeal to his own feelings, if, thus circumstanced, he could indeed be happy with her as his wife.

Extremely affected, Julio was for some time unable to reply. “ Ah ! Valoria,”

he at length exclaimed, "most amiable of human beings! I cannot help loving you still more for your candour, even while it agonizes my heart.—I had hoped," he continued, "that fate had destined me for the happy man, to whom would be intrusted the care of your future felicity.—I have been deceived; yet, believe me, you will never meet with one who would have more ardently sought to promote it."

He paused, overcome by excess of feeling; when Valoria laid her hand gently on his shoulder, as she said: "Do not, d'Albini, I conjure you, be thus agitated.—Do not afflict yourself in this manner, if you would spare my heart a bitter pang, in the reflection that I have caused the unhappiness of a worthy man."

"And is it thus, Valoria," returned the Conte, "you would heal the wounds you inflict? Ah! no; this gentle pity

only serves to aggravate the feelings of regret for your loss."

"Do you suppose, then, d'Albini," replied Valoria, "that because I cannot accept you as a lover, your happiness is therefore of no importance to me?—No; believe me, I am truly sensible of the honour you would confer upon me; and it will ever be my dearest wish to rank you among the number of my best friends."

"Well, be it so, Valoria," said d'Albini; "consider me henceforth as the most devoted of your friends; and I will not entirely relinquish the hope, that when time shall have effaced from your mind the memory of the happy Veroni, I may perhaps obtain a claim to a tenderer title."

Valoria made no answer, for she was unwilling to encourage a hope that might

never be realized; and her promise to the Contessa prevented her from totally putting an end to his expectations.

The behaviour of d'Albini to our heroine after this conversation, was tender and respectful as before, but he had lost his usual animation; and when in her society, there was a timidity and restraint about him, very different from his former ease and vivacity. Valoria remarked this change in his manners with uneasiness and regret, and was truly happy when the Contessa informed her that the following morning she should quit the villa d'Albini, and set out for her own estate.

At parting, her amiable hostess embraced Valoria with much tenderness, as she exclaimed: "I trust, my lovely young friend, I shall soon have the felicity of seeing you again, when I shall be able to enjoy the pleasure of your society for a

longer period ; and perhaps," she added, smiling, " the day may come, when I shall have a *claim* to some part of your time as well as my friend the Contessa Reveldi."

Valoria blushed, as she replied with sweetness : " Our destiny, my dear madam, does not always depend upon ourselves ; but whatever mine may be, it will ever be my greatest honour to possess the friendship of the Contessa d'Albini."

Julio was much affected by the departure of Valoria, and as he assisted her into the carriage, he said in a stifled voice : " I dare not flatter myself with the hope of being dearer to you when we meet again ; but I shall have one consolation to sustain me in your absence, a conviction that you will not cease to remember me as your friend."—" Farewell, then, my friend," returned Valoria ; " and may Heaven bless you ?"

D'Albini pressed her offered hand to his heart; and the Contessa Reveldi being seated in the carriage, it drove off. Julio continued to stand upon the steps of the portico till it was out of sight; when silently breathing a prayer for the happiness of Valoria, he returned, melancholy and dejected, into the house, which now appeared to him as a desert, since it no longer contained the woman whom he *loved*.

CHAPTER IX.

" His mien was noble, and a lofty air
Sat on his polished brow. Yet oft a tear
Bedimmed the lustre of his radiant eye,
And showed some rooted sorrow at his heart,
Which rankled there."

THE road that our travellers followed, lay through the village where the villa Veroni was situated, and so great was the desire Valoria expressed to see her beloved Marchesa, that her amiable friend determined to gratify her, if it was possible, and accordingly dispatched a note to the Marchesa from the inn, intreating to see her immediately.

During the interval of the servant's absence, who had been sent with it, Valoria

remained at the window, where every object she beheld reminded her of Octavian. From it she distinctly perceived the white turrets of the villa, and though the distance prevented her from seeing it, she easily traced the spot where stood the fisherman's cottage. She was aroused from the reflections these interesting objects excited by the sound of a carriage drawing up to the inn, and in a few moments the door of the apartment opened, and the Marchesa di Veroni rushed into the extended arms of her two friends.

As soon as the first emotions of pleasure, which their unexpected meeting had given rise to, were over, Valoria remarked with sorrow the alteration that had taken place in the Marchesa. She was pale and thin, and an expression of the deepest melancholy was visible in her countenance. Too well our heroine conjectured the cause; an enquiry after Octavian

hovered on her lips ; but her timidity repressed it, and she sat in painful expectation, when the Contessa introduced the subject, by asking the Marchesa if her son was yet returned from Naples ?”

“ You have seen Octavian,” replied the Marchesa: “ Then tell me, my friend ; or rather you, Valoria, since you are most likely to have remarked it, how does he look ?”

“ Ah ! Marchesa,” exclaimed Valoria: “ Did I guess wrong when I fancied Signor Octavian had been very ill ?”

“ No,” she returned ; “ he has indeed been dangerously ill ; and words can but feebly pourtray what I have suffered since we parted.” — “ And yet you never mentioned it to me in any of your letters,” said Valoria — “ Ah ! dearest Madam, why did you not do so ?”

"Because it could answer no purpose to distress you," replied the Marchesa, "and on that account I kept silent on every thing that occurred after your departure."

Valoria had indeed been hurt at this conduct in the Marchesa; and she now implored her so earnestly to inform her how Octavian had received the intelligence of her being gone; that, unable to resist her pathetic intreaties, she complied as follows:

"Two days had passed, my young friend, after your departure, before it was known to Octavian. Claudio, I suppose, discovered it, when he visited his parents, and by him it was communicated to my son. It is impossible to convey to you an idea of his anguish at this discovery; his despair exceeded all bounds, and for many days I entertained the most terrible

apprehensions for the consequences. All the soothing of maternal tenderness, every art that an alarmed imagination could suggest, I put in practice, to restore him to composure: they were not exerted in vain: and I soon ceased to tremble for his life: but a dejection, which nothing could overcome, took possession of him, and he passed almost his whole time in solitary rambles, from which he always came back more wretched than when he went out. The Marchese, who had been absent from home for some days, now returned, and again urged Octavian on the subject of his marriage, to which he returned a decided negative; and, to my great surprize, his father entirely dropped it for some time.

“ Octavian at length received a letter, from whence I never could discover, the contents of which flung him into a perfect frenzy. Almost immediately he left

the villa, accompanied by the Marchese, who appeared to be in his confidence, a circumstance which caused me no small degree of amazement. At the end of a week they returned; Octavian was now calm and composed in his manners, but his former despondence had increased to a dreadful degree; he seldom spoke, and in those hours when the forms of society obliged him to leave his usual solitude, he would sit silent, and apparently absorbed in the deepest reflection.

“ In vain I sought, by every persuasion, to induce him to reveal to me the cause of this strange conduct; for some unusual cause, I was convinced, existed for it.—‘ My mother,’ he frequently exclaimed, ‘ you are dearer to me than any thing on earth; why then should I afflict you by communicating to you a sorrow you have no power to remedy? Be satisfied time alone can alleviate my present

distress, and your enquiries give me more pain than I can express. The conflict in Octavian's mind threw him, at length, into a nervous fever, from which there was scarcely any hope of his recovery. Day and night I watched by his pillow, expecting every moment to see him torn from me, and in a state of mind to which words can but feebly do justice. Heaven in mercy, however, spared me this affliction. Octavian was, at length, pronounced out of danger, and as he gradually recovered his health, he sought, by an assumed cheerfulness, to hide from me the grief that preyed upon his heart. But the eye of maternal love is not to be deceived, and I read in his languid countenance what he so eagerly endeavoured to conceal.

"A short time after his recovery, the Marchese again mentioned the subject nearest his heart to the desponding Octa-

vian ; he no longer made any opposition to his father's will ; and a few weeks since he went to Naples, on a visit to the Duca d'Alcarmo, where he has remained ever since ; and I hear from the Marchese, who accompanied him, that in his conduct to Lucillia, if he does not appear a passionate lover, he is at least a very respectful and attentive one. I now expect his return to the villa every day, with the Duca and his daughter, who are to remain here till the nuptials take place, which will be as soon as the family are out of mourning."

The Marchesa here ceased ; and Valoria, no longer able to conceal her emotions, retired to the window, to indulge them unrestrained. The Contessa Reveldi, who saw how much she was affected, now turned the conversation on indifferent subjects, and the Marchesa

soon after bade them farewell; our travellers then proceeded on their journey. Nothing worthy of notice occurred during its continuance, and at the end of a few days they arrived at the Contessa's villa, in Tuscany.

The retirement of this place, and the beauty of its surrounding scenery, was congenial to the present tone of Valoria's mind, and the greatest part of her time was spent in rambling about the grounds, usually alone, or with no other companion but a book. In these solitary moments, her mind continually recurred to Octavian, and his unaccountable conduct. In vain did she dwell on her conversation with him on the night of the fête; and in the account she had afterwards had from the Marchesa, nothing appeared that could throw any light on the mystery that enveloped his actions. But he was un-

happy, and that conviction was sufficient to embitter every moment of Valoria's existence.

The Contessa's arrival was no sooner known by her friends in the neighbourhood, than she received numerous visits and invitations. The talents and beauty of her protégée were no less admired in the country than they had formerly been at Rome; but though the natural sweetness of her disposition, made Valoria enter with readiness into society, since by so doing she could give pleasure to her friends; yet her happiest moments were those she devoted to her solitary walks.

It was on a delightful evening, soon after her arrival, that our heroine went out on her usual ramble, and tempted by the beauty of the hour, she extended her walk to the road that led from the park to the village. It was sunk deep

between two craggy banks, thickly clothed with trees, and on the top of one of these cliffs was a mountain path that conducted to an adjoining hamlet. To this Valoria now climbed, and seated on the short turf, she surveyed the prospect before her. The villagers were returning home from the vineyards; and some, who were already arrived, were assembled in groups around the doors of their cottages. A number of young people were dancing beneath the shade of some chestnuts, whose rustic melody, borne on the breeze, reached the elevated spot where Valoria was seated, a pleased, yet pensive spectator of their amusement. The scene forcibly recalled to her mind the summer evenings she had passed at D'Albano, when, with her dear lost Eugenia, she had so often joined in the rural dance; and lost in the train of reflections this remembrance gave rise to, she sat regardless of the passing time, when the

bell from a neighbouring convent warned her of the lateness of the hour, and she hastily descended the path on her return home. The increasing twilight caused her to quicken her pace, and she had just reached the park-gate, when several men suddenly rushed from behind a clump of trees, and seizing her in their arms, bore her along the road, which extended on one side of the Contessa's domain. A carriage was waiting at some distance, at the sight of which Valoria's fortitude entirely forsook her, and she fainted away. The motion of the chaise recalled her to her senses, and she found herself alone with one of the ruffians, who had taken off her hat, and was bathing her temples. A flood of tears now came to her relief, and in a voice, whose pathetic tones might have melted a savage heart, she conjured her companion to inform her, whither he was conveying her, and to whom? To all her questions, however,

he preserved an inflexible silence, and finding every attempt to move him fruitless; Valoria leaned back in the carriage, and covering her face with her handkerchief, resigned herself to her reflections.

That Montaldi was the person who had conceived the infamous scheme of tearing her from her friends; she could not doubt; and, acquainted as she was with his character, she was well convinced she had every thing to apprehend from his lawless violence. The terrific ideas that now crowded upon her mind were so dreadful as almost to threaten destruction to her reason; and it required all the confidence her piety to an Almighty Protector inspired her with, to look with tolerable composure on the scene before her. Her mind now recurred to the anguish the Contessa would feel, when acquainted with her absence, and her tears fell in torrents at the idea.

Valoria and her companion continued to travel the whole night with unabated rapidity, and the first dawn of day that stole through the carriage windows, found them in the midst of a wild, uncultivated waste, which bore no other signs of habitation than a miserable looking hovel, where they alighted soon after sun-rise. On entering the only apartment it contained, her gloomy escort broke silence, and presenting Valoria some refreshments, desired her to partake of them. Our heroine passively complied, and the horses in waiting being put to, they again resumed their journey, which continued without any further interruption till they stopped at an obscure inn, where they were to pass the night.

Completely exhausted, Valoria was borne in her companion's arms from the carriage into the house; where after taking a glass of wine and some bread, she

intreated the hostess to conduct her to her apartment. A hope of being able to excite the compassion of this woman, made Valoria anxious to be alone with her; but this hope was disappointed by the ruffian, who accompanied her to the door of the chamber, where he waited till the landlady had lighted a lamp, and then bidding our heroine good night, returned with her down stairs.

Thus frustrated in her intention, Valoria now eagerly searched around the room, in hopes of finding some means to effect her escape, but her efforts were ineffectual; there was no other outlet than the one by which she entered, and the window was high, and strongly secured by iron bars.

Wearied and disappointed, Valoria now relinquished her search, and after imploring the protection of Heaven, she retired

to her humble pallet; where, overcome by fatigue and want of rest, she soon fell into a profound slumber, from which she was awakened the following morning, by her hostess knocking at the door, and informing her, that her companions were impatient to set out. Valoria immediately arose, and after taking some breakfast, again entered the carriage. They continued to travel with the same rapidity as before, stopping only to change horses and to sleep, as her conductors, at the last stage, had furnished themselves with provisions, in order to prevent any unnecessary delays.

Every attempt of Valoria to gain any information of what part of the country she was in, proved ineffectual; all she was convinced of was, that they were not conveying her back to Sicily, since in that case they must have directed their course to the coast; instead of which,

the tract they pursued lay through a mountainous and inland country.

At the end of four days' incessant travelling, in the most lonely and unfrequented roads, they entered an extensive forest. The last rays of the setting sun gleamed on the trees, as the carriage turned from the beaten track upon the turf; but Valoria, occupied by her own reflections, took no notice of this circumstance, till her companion, calling to the driver, desired him to proceed as fast as possible, as they were near the end of their journey. These words arrested our heroine's attention, and she now observed, with anxiety, the route they pursued.

In a short time they gained the extremity of the forest, where the road descended into a deep dell, less covered with wood, but no less wild and uncultivated than the thick shades they had quitted.

The carriage now struck into an avenue of trees, which soon conducted them in front of a building, but of what sort or dimensions, the increasing gloom prevented Valoria from distinguishing. On reaching the outward gate, the driver stopped, and putting a bugle to his mouth, blew a loud and shrill blast, which was answered by another from within. The gate was immediately thrown open, and her companion, hastily springing from the carriage, presented his hand to Valoria, to assist her in alighting. Resistance was useless, and our trembling heroine suffered herself to be conducted across a large court, followed by a servant with a torch. A cold chill struck to her heart, as the porter unclosed the heavy folding doors, which admitted them into a Gothic hall of large extent, and paved with black marble. By the light which preceded her, Valoria remarked the ruin and desolation of this

place, the roof in many parts having fallen in ; thus laying it open to all the inclemencies of the weather. The pillars had many of them given way, and were scattered in fragments on the pavement.

After crossing the hall, Valoria was led into a room beyond it, which was less ruined, and still retained some of its furniture. Here her conductor left her, having previously lighted a lamp ; and on retiring she heard him lock the door after him. In a state of agitation which it would be difficult to describe, our heroine remained for some time after his departure, when the sound of approaching footsteps in the hall awakened new sensations of terror in her mind ; and her eyes were fixed on the door, with mingled emotions of fear and expectation.—The next moment it was flung open, and Montaldi himself entered the apartment.

With an air of assumed humility, he approached Valoria, and falling at her feet, with all the artful eloquence he so eminently possessed, implored her forgiveness for the step he had taken, imputing it entirely to the violent passion he felt for her, which rendered existence itself a burden to him, without the only object for whom he wished to live.

Valoria had too just a sense of her own dignity, to descend to any of the usual feminine expressions of resentment ; and coldly desiring Montaldi to rise, she exclaimed, " If you indeed desire, Signor, to obtain my forgiveness, you must secure it by immediately restoring me to those friends from whom you have so basely ; so treacherously torn me. On that condition alone can I ever forget the past."

" And do you then think, Valoria," he replied, " that I shall again suffer you

to escape from me, after all the trouble I have taken to secure you.—No, believe me; you never quit this castle, but as my wife!”

“Then,” exclaimed Valoria, “I shall never quit it—for sooner would I endure all the tortures the most diabolical cruelty could invent, than become the wife of Montaldi.”

“Infatuated girl!” returned Montaldi, in a tone of passion—“Too soon will you have reason to repent your scorn and obstinacy.—You are now completely in my power; beware lest you provoke me to use it to its fullest extent.”

“Montaldi,” exclaimed Valoria, in a firm, determined accent, “I equally despise your offers and yourself. You have no power over me, but what Providence has put into your hands; and

though, for wise but inscrutable reasons, he now permits you to triumph, you may rest confident he will not turn a deaf ear to the supplications of oppressed Innocence."

Montaldi replied only by a smile of contempt, and a servant now entered, to inform him that his guests were arrived and waiting for him."

"Tell them," returned Montaldi, "I will be with them in a moment, and send Loretta hither, to conduct this lady to her chamber. You will excuse my rudeness, Signora," he added, turning to Valoria, "in leaving you thus abruptly, but indispensable business requires my attendance."

"No apology is necessary, Signor," she replied, and rising from her seat, courtesied coldly to him, and followed her conductress, who now made her ap-

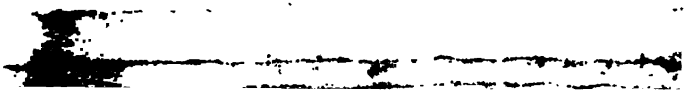
pearance, and was led by her up a grand staircase of black marble, terminating in a long and spacious gallery, the excavated roof and shattered windows of which, presented as striking a prospect of neglect and desolation as that of the hall below. Along the walls, at equal distances, were ranged doors, one of which was opened by Loretta, and admitted our heroine into a vaulted chamber of large dimensions, hung with tapestry, now falling in tattered remnants from the walls. At one end of the room, beneath a canopy, was placed a bed, formerly of blue velvet; but time had faded every trace of its original colour, and the hangings were in many parts eaten entirely through by moths or other vermin; a table and a few chairs composed the rest of the furniture.

Valoria cast a melancholy and desponding look over her vast apartment. Its cheerless and desolate aspect struck to

her heart, and flinging herself into a seat, she burst into a flood of tears. Without heeding her, Loretta lighted a lamp, and quitted the room. She soon, however, returned with a basket of provisions, and spreading a cloth on the table, she covered it with an elegant and plentiful repast, of which she invited Valoria to partake. Our heroine had tasted nothing since morning, and as nourishment was necessary to support her fortitude, she did not refuse to comply.

As soon as supper was over, Valoria dismissed her attendant for the night, and securely fastening her door, she flung herself on her knees, and after recommending herself to the care and protection of Heaven, retired to bed, where, in spite of her cares and terrors, she enjoyed a calm and undisturbed repose.

At an early hour Valoria quitted her couch, and hastily dressing herself, opened



THE MYSTERIES

...to breathe the fresh breeze of
The sun was rising between
the forest, in which her case-
...the dew glistened on every
leaf, and the birds poured forth their
songs from among the foliage. All
these things conspired to awaken the
longings of devotion in Valoria's
heart. Holding her hands together,
and in the general throng, in ex-
pression of praise and adoration to the
merciful Creator of all. Her
eyes were turned, she continued
the prospect before her, till
...with breakfast.

...something so repulsive in
the manner of this woman, as
...any concept of Valoria
...and when retiring,
...of her repast, she made
...her.

...passed the first day of

Valoria's confinement, without books, or any means whatever of amusing herself. Her sole employment was to stand by the window, to watch the woodcutters at their occupation, and the groups of cattle reposing under the shade, or cropping the herbage in the dell beneath. She neither saw nor heard any thing of Montaldi till the evening, when Loretta came with a message from him, desiring her presence at the banquet. Resistance to this mandate was vain, and with tremulous steps she followed her conductress down stairs. In crossing the hall, the sound of carousing burst upon her ear from an adjoining apartment; and appalled, Valoria receded a few paces, and leaned, in trembling agitation, against a pillar.

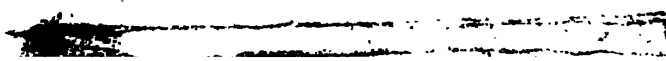
The loud voice of Loretta, as she called on her to proceed, aroused her to an exertion of her mental and corporeal powers,

and she followed her to the other extremity of the hall, where a door being flung open, she entered the banqueting room, which appeared in a better state of repair than any she had yet seen in the castle. The lofty roof was illumined with torches, and at the head of a table, in the middle of the apartment, was seated Montaldi, surrounded by twenty figures, in a sort of martial uniform, whose fierce looks and stern appearance might have infused terror into a mind more courageous than Valoria's. Trembling, she clung to the door-case for support; when Montaldi, springing forward and seizing her hand, presented her to his formidable looking guests as the lovely mistress of the castle, and leading her to the table, seated her at his right hand.

With downcast eyes Valoria sat, shrinking, with sensitive modesty, from the rude

and penetrating glances of the strangers, and unable to taste the viands before her, though repeatedly urged to it by Montaldi. The cloth being removed, the goblet was circulated briskly around the board, and the conversation, which had hitherto been confined within the bounds of decorum, now became loud, noisy, and even licentious. Songs were called for, and the vaulted roof resounded with their convivial strains. Shuddering and pale, Valoria was a silent and dismayed spectator of the scene before her; when Montaldi, catching her hand, exclaimed: "Why are you thus absent, my sweet one? Come, come, rouse your spirits, and let your heavenly voice entertain my friends, and give melody to our banquet."

"Indeed, indeed, Signor," she replied, tears streaming down her colourless cheeks, "you must excuse me, for I really cannot sing."



Assuming an air of authority, Montaldi declared he would take no excuses, and Valoria attempted to comply. Her voice, though faint and tremulous, seemed by its magic tones to subdue the almost inebriated circle around her; and when she ceased, a murmur of applause stole on her ear from every side. A gentleman who sat beside her presented her a glass of wine, which she eagerly drank, to save her from fainting; and turning to Montaldi, implored him, in the sweetest accents of supplication, to permit her to retire, as she really was too unwell to remain any longer at the table.

Softened by the enchantment of her voice, and perceiving the paleness and languor of her countenance, Montaldi did not offer to detain her, and immediately rung the bell for Loretta. On her entrance he arose, and leading Valoria to the door, bade her good night, as he imprinted a kiss on her burning cheek. The

pain of wounded delicacy rankling in her bosom, she made him no answer, and snatching her hand from him, followed Loretta to her apartment. But here her spirits failed, and she wept almost convulsively. Relieved by her tears, Valoria became composed, and dismissing her attendant, she sought, in the exercises of devotion, for consolation and support; nor was she disappointed. Her mind strengthened by the effusions of piety, she was again able to reflect calmly on her situation; and though she had every thing to apprehend from Montaldi's power, hope whispered to her heart that she might still escape from it. From Loretta, indeed, she dared not expect any assistance; but there were doubtless other domestics in the castle, and it might be in her power to obtain access to some one or other of them; and there was no saying what effect bribes and promises might produce. The idea was fraught

with consolation, and in the hope that her project might be realized Valoria now sought her pillow, where, though her repose was less uninterrupted than on the preceding night, she enjoyed several hours of refreshing slumber.

The following morning Valoria, who justly considered employment as the best antidote against corroding reflection, ventured to ask Loretta if it was possible for her to procure a few books to amuse herself? Loretta replied, "she had received no orders to prevent her having any, and that as the Signor was engaged with his friends in the chase, she might, if she pleased, go with her into the library, and take what she liked."

Valoria thanked her with ineffable sweetness for this permission, and was conducted down stairs into a room which had formerly been a library, but which

now retained no other right to that appellation, than what it obtained from a few shelves, on which were heaped a number of old books, in a very mutilated condition. After a long search, our heroine selected a collection of the most perfect, which she conveyed to her own apartment, and furnished with this store of amusement, the day hung less heavy on her hands than the former had done.

In the evening she again received a summons to attend Montaldi, and as to refuse would only subject her to greater insult, she accordingly obeyed the mandate. On entering the banquet room, Valoria found Montaldi alone, who taking her hand, led her to the supper table, and seated himself beside her. The repast was almost a silent one, but Valoria remarked with uneasiness the deep and frequent draughts of her companion; and, disgusting as the party of the pre-

ceding night had been to her, she felt it would be infinitely preferable to a *tête-à-tête* with Montaldi, in the situation to which he was fast reducing himself.

As soon as the servants had retired, Montaldi arose from the table, and drawing his chair to a window which was open, for the night was exceedingly sultry, he desired Valoria to take an opposite seat. Tremblingly she complied, and after a short silence Montaldi exclaimed: "Valoria I am determined no longer to be trifled with.—From the first moment I beheld you, it was my fixed resolution to make you mine.—To put this design in execution has long been the actuating principle of my every action, and Fate has kindly forwarded my plans, by again throwing you into my power.—In becoming my wife you shall have no reason to repent the confidence you place in my generosity, since it is my intention to

settle one-half of my fortune upon you ; and if splendour is your desire, you shall possess enough to satisfy Vanity herself. The uncontrouled mistress of your actions, my whole life shall be dedicated to promote your felicity.—Be wise, then, Valoria ; and by a willing compliance with my wishes, secure your own happiness, and that of the man who adores you to distraction.”

“ Signor,” returned Valoria, “ I acknowledge your offers are generous and noble ; but is it my fault that I cannot bring my heart to yield an assent to them ? To love does not always depend on ourselves.—Why, then, by a cruel and unmanly persecution, would you render yourself the object of my aversion ?”

“ Well I know,” he replied, “ whence this reluctance, this obstinacy, springs ; but mark me, Valoria ; you cherish a

predilection for one who no longer regards your affections.—Octavian, if he still remembers you, curses the hour when first you met !”

“ May I ask, Signor,” inquired Valoria, “ how you became so well acquainted with Octavian’s sentiments ?”

“ By means,” returned Montaldi, “ that admit no doubt of their identity. Why, then, should you reject the happiness in your power, for him who regards you with scorn and contempt. Reflect well on your present situation, dependant as you are on my power, and surrounded by those who are entirely devoted to me, and ready to obey the smallest of my commands.—Put me not to the disagreeable necessity of resorting to compulsion as the means of enforcing your compliance with my determination ; but by a ready consent obtain a title to my gratitude,

43

and secure your own liberty and happiness."

"Montaldi," said Valoria with firmness—"I again repeat it, threats and intreaties on this subject are equally fruitless.—Octavian is not the cause of my rejection; even had he never existed, I could not have been the wife of Montaldi. A motive actuates my conduct, known only to myself and Heaven; and here I swear, in the presence of the God that I adore, to endure every species of wretchedness you can inflict upon me, rather than wed him, who next to Vice, is the object of my abhorrence."

"Sayest thou so, rash girl!" cried Montaldi, rising furiously as he spoke: "Then, by Heaven will I force thee to retract thy oath.—This moment gives you to my arms; and, humbled to the dust, you shall sue for that distinction you now disdain to accept."

“Without waiting her reply, he caught his intended victim in his arms, and in spite of her shrieks and struggles bore her towards a sofa.—Another instant had most probably decided her destiny, when a deep groan resounded through the apartment, and a voice, in hollow sepulchral tones, exclaimed: “Villain, forbear!—nor add to thy crimes the destruction of unprotected Innocence!”

Appalled by the awful warning, Montaldi relinquished his grasp on our heroine, and stood for some moments in an attitude of fixed attention, in expectation of its being repeated:—but the voice of passion silenced the pleadings of pity with the reproaches of conscience; and again he attempted to seize his trembling victim—when a door at the further end of the room slowly receded, and a figure closely enveloped in white robes glided into the apartment. One hand brandished a drawn

dagger; and again its deep accents sounded on his ear——“ Monster, desist!—or the spirit of Eugenia prepares to avenge Valoria’s injuries and her own !”

Cold drops of perspiration stood on the forehead of Montaldi, as he gazed on the phantom with distended eyes; and groaning deeply, he sunk down upon the floor. —Valoria seized the moment of his insensibility to effect her escape; nor did she for one instant check her speed, till she gained her own apartment, when flinging herself on the bed, she lost all recollection of what had passed.

Long it was ere our heroine recovered her faculties, and still longer before she was able to reflect collectedly on the scene she had just witnessed. Her mind had ever rejected the idea of supernatural agency; but her belief was staggered by what she had so recently beheld, and she

dwelt with a degree of awful amazement on the appearance of the spectre, if indeed it was such, for she still retained some doubts of its being so in reality. Whatever had been the form, its miraculous and unexpected interference had certainly been the means of saving her from inevitable destruction; and her heart expanded in gratitude to that Being who had preserved her in a moment of imminent peril, when destitute of every earthly succour.

After offering her pious thanksgivings at the Throne of Mercy, for her wonderful escape, Valoria endeavoured to compose herself to rest, and gradually sunk into a slumber, from which she did not awake till Loretta knocked at the door with her breakfast. The day passed with our heroine as the preceding one had done, except that she did not receive any summons to attend Montaldi at the even-

ing banquet, which she had previously resolved not to obey, should he send any.

When the increasing twilight prevented her from any longer being able to read, Valoria seated herself by the window, and watched the progress of the orb of night, as she slowly arose behind the trees of the forest. The stilness of the hour, and the soft beauty of the scene before her, awakened in her mind a train of tender recollections ; and leaning her cheek upon her hand, she sat, lost in thought, and regardless of the waning night, when footsteps in the gallery caught her attention. Supposing it to be Loretta, she did not change her posture ; when the door was burst open, and Montaldi, followed by several ruffians, rushed into the room. —“ Seize her instantly,” he exclaimed, “ and convey her as I have commanded.”

The men advanced towards her, when

swiftly springing past them, Valoria flew to the bed, and clinging to one of the pillars, articulated in the piercing tones of dismay or supplication: "Oh! for pity; kill me at once, and do not deliver me into the power of that wretch!—If you are parents, or brothers; if you would not see your own wives and daughters fall a defenceless prey to licentious passion; preserve me, by a speedy death, from the brutality of Montaldi!"—

For a moment the ruffians paused, as if irresolute.—Valoria's beauty, as she stood before them; her cheek flushed by agitation; her hair falling in dishevelled luxuriance over her graceful figure; and the melting accents of her voice, awakened a momentary compassion in their hearts; when Montaldi furiously exclaimed:—"Villains! dare you dispute my orders!—Tear her instantly from her hold, and carry her hence!"

The ruffians immediately obeyed; and bore her in their arms to the staircase; when, entirely overcome by excess of terror, she fainted away. In this situation she was conveyed by her merciless persecutors, to one of the castle dungeons; and having laid her on a bed of straw, at the further end, they lighted a lamp, and left her. On recovering her perception, Valoria found herself alone; and rising; she took up the light, and proceeded to examine her dreary abode. It was spacious and lofty, and the blue moulds that hung on the walls declared the excessive dampness of the place. After walking around the dungeon, she again flung herself on her lowly couch, and sought to obtain oblivion of her sorrows in sleep. Long it was ere the drowsy god deigned to visit her pillow, or steep her senses in forgetfulness; and the first rays of light that stole through the grates of her prison, again recalled her to a consciousness

of her situation. Pensively seated on her bed, she watched the strengthening dawn, when the massy bolts were undrawn that secured the door, and a man entered, bearing in his hand a basket and a pitcher, which he put down upon the ground, and retired in silence. As soon as he was gone, Valoria opened the basket, which contained only a small loaf, and some dried fruits, with no other beverage than water. On these she made her morning repast, which being finished, she endeavoured to beguile the tedious hours by traversing her prison. We shall not dwell on the reflections of our heroine during this dreary day, since they were such as must naturally engross any one in her situation. Her firmness, however, to resist the power of her persecutor remained unshaken; and she determined rather to pass the residue of her life in confinement, than ever marry the murderer of her adored friend.

No one interrupted Valoria's solitude during the day, and with a mournful regret she beheld the last rays of light fade from her window, and resign her to total darkness, for her lamp had long been extinguished; and seated on her bed, she impatiently waited the return of the jailor with her provision, in order to procure a light. Some time had elapsed, when she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and the door being flung open beheld, not the jailor, as she expected, but Montaldi himself.—Pale and shuddering, Valoria arose, as advancing towards her he exclaimed in a stern accent:—"Valoria, I am come hither to hear your final determination."

"It was unnecessary, Signor," she replied, "since you are already acquainted with it.—Heaven itself declares against your impious intentions; and by a mes-

senger from the tomb, warns you to desist from them."

"And do you suppose, Valoria," exclaimed Montaldi contemptuously, "that I am to be frightened from my purpose by fantastic terrors?"

"You did not think them fantastic, Signor," returned Valoria, "when the awful figure appeared in the banquetting room.—Oh! let not the solemn warning be lost upon you!—Let not the murdered Eugenia come from her grave to call you to repentance, and come in vain!"

"Murdered!"—repeated Montaldi in a tone of dismay; "Who told you Eugenia was murdered?"

"Herself!" replied Valoria firmly.
"Heaven, in the last sad moments of her

existence, conducted me to her bed of death—to hear her injuries, and thy unparalleled villany—and there I vowed never to be Montaldi's wife, though death itself should be the consequence of my refusal!"

For some moments Montaldi remained silent.—To find that Valoria was acquainted with his most dreadful secret, inflicted a pang upon his heart, more agonizing than any he had ever yet experienced.—Short and transient, however, were these feelings of regret and remorse; and the knowledge Valoria had obtained, served only as a further incitement to him to prosecute his project in regard to her: since, possessed of such a secret, his life was continually in her power; but when once united to him, it would be equally for her interest and honour to conceal it for ever in her own bosom.—After a short pause, he again addressed her.

“ I could have wished, Valoria,” he said, “ that you had never been acquainted with this transaction ;—but since fate has ordained otherwise, I shall not attempt to deny this charge ; and remember, yourself was the cause that compelled me to the deed.—Had you, when I first avowed my passion for you, listened to the voice of love, instead of the stern dictates of virtue, Eugenia had still existed—but you blindly accelerated her destruction ; since, when I found I could alone hope to possess you as my wife, I resolved on removing the only obstacle that opposed your being so. But here my intention ended, and Eugenia had to thank herself alone for what ensued.— I revealed to her, without reserve, my whole design ; and on her refusal to write to you as if upon her death-bed, and implore you, as her last request, to unite your destiny with mine, I issued the order for her assassination.—Let her fate, Valoria,

be a warning to you of what I am capable of, and teach you submission to my wishes.—Possessed as you are of a secret of such importance to my existence, I cannot suffer you to live but as my wife.—And here I swear, that if you consent not to my proposals, though you are dearer to me than the vital current which animates my heart, my own hand shall immolate you as a victim at the shrine of despised love—and when I view you breathless at my feet, it will be with gloomy satisfaction, since then I shall be assured, that if you were not mine, you will never be another's.—Reflect well, Valoria," he continued, "on what I have said. The choice is before you; either an early tomb, or a life of affluence and happiness in my arms; for one of them must be yours—I do not now require an answer (for Valoria was going to speak;) a question of so much consequence demands serious deliberation; and to-morrow night I will return to hear your final determi-

nation,—may it be propitious to yourself, and me !”

Without waiting a reply, Montaldi quitted the dungeon, leaving Valoria in a state of mind to which words could never do justice.—Dreadful was the tumult in her soul : but she still adhered firmly to the dictates of rectitude, that determined her, in spite of death itself, never to violate the promise given to her dying friend, on no consideration whatever to be the wife of Montaldi.—“ Dear, murdered Eugenia !” she exclaimed, “ thy friend was the innocent cause of thy destruction ; and Heaven, perhaps, demands that I should expiate with my life the involuntary crime I have been guilty of.—If so, I submit, and offer myself a willing victim at the shrine of friendship.—Short and unfortunate has been my life, but it has been blameless, and I rely on the mercy of my Heavenly Father, to receive me with pity

and forgiveness, in a better state of existence."

Valoria's thoughts now recurred to Octavian, so long, so tenderly beloved. It was true Montaldi had told her she was the object of his scorn and contempt: and a thousand times she enquired of her throbbing heart, if it was possible?—Oh! no; it could not be—Octavian had indeed said himself, he no longer loved; but it was not for a disposition like his, to hate without a just cause; and she had never given him any, but by following the wishes of his family instead of his own.

"No, beloved Octavian!" she exclaimed, "your heart is too good, too generous, to harbour resentment against thy poor Valoria.—Oh! may the knowledge of her hapless fate never reach thy ears; since well I am assured, your compassionate soul would make you sorrow

for it, and not for worlds would I have you be unhappy!—The Contessa Reveldi too, my dear, my more than mother, what would she feel, could she foresee the destiny of her wretched child!—Ah, I shall never, never behold her more!”

Valoria's tears here flowed in torrents, and for some moments her fortitude entirely forsook her; humbly she now supplicated of Heaven for submission to his will, and strength to support the fate, for which she might be reserved. Her composure returned, and though nature shuddered at the idea of a violent and untimely death, she endeavoured to find consolation in the hope of being rewarded in a better world, for the unmerited sufferings she had endured in this.

Our heroine passed the remainder of the night and the following day, in fervent devotions to heaven, and arguments with

her own mind to reconcile her to her expected fate; and calm and collected, she awaited with firmness and resignation the moment that was to decide her destiny. The rays of day light again faded from her window, and a few moments after midnight the door of her dreary prison was unclosed, and admitted Montaldi, bearing in one hand a dagger, and in the other a parchment.—With solemn steps he approached Valoria, as he exclaimed: “I am now come, Valoria, for the last time, to know your decision.—Consent immediately to sign this contract of marriage, or this moment is your last.”

“Strike, then,” she returned with firmness, “for never will I wed a murderer!”

This was the first time Valoria had ever given Montaldi this appellation; it roused every fiery passion in his soul;

and raising the dagger, he aimed a blow at the bosom of his lovely and defenceless victim, who by an involuntary emotion folded her arms across it, which received the wound directed at her heart.— Still bent on his diabolical purpose, Montaldi again attempted to repeat the stroke; when the awful figure who had appeared in the banquetting-room glided between him and the devoted girl, and wresting the weapon from his hand, plunged it into his shoulder, when he immediately fell upon the ground without sense or motion.— Trembling and pale Valoria stood for some moments as if doubting the reality of her preservation, when the phantom gently motioned her to follow.— Hastily binding her handkerchief round her arm, she obeyed, and was led by her mysterious guide up a steep pair of winding stairs, to a long passage beyond, at the end of which her conductor paused; and opening a door, made a sign to

Valoria to advance.—She immediately complied, and on passing through the portal, found herself in the grand hall.

An involuntary emotion made her turn round in search of the figure, but it was gone ; and darting across the hall, she made towards the entrance, determined to seize the favourable moment of escaping from the castle.

The light form of Valoria, as she glided with noiseless steps over the marble pavement, and her white robe stained with the blood that had flowed from her wound, gave her the appearance of a spectre ; and the porter, who beheld her advancing towards him, was instantly convinced that it was one of the numerous ghosts, who he firmly believed haunted the castle. —A cold sweat covered his body ; he attempted to speak ; but excessive terror deprived him of the power of articulation, and he fell on his face in a swoon.—

Valoria who readily conjectured the cause of his alarm, lost not a moment in taking advantage of it ; and snatching the keys from his hand, and unlocking the folding doors, darted quickly through them, and was soon beyond the outer gates of the castle.

Winged by fear, she flew along the avenue ; nor once checked her speed till she gained the outskirts of the forest, when she stopped to recover her breath, and listen whether she was pursued. The murmuring of the wind among the branches of the trees, seemed to the timid fugitive the voices of those who were sent in quest of her, and every sound in the rustling underwood she fancied to be their approaching footsteps ; after resting a few minutes, she again resumed her flight, and rushed into the forest. With difficulty Valoria made her way through the thickly interwoven boughs, and trem-

bling lest the noise she made in doing so, should direct her pursuers to the spot where she was, her cloaths torn by the brambles, and her feet wounded by the briars that obstructed her progress.

Bewildered by the numerous paths that presented themselves to her, she was uncertain which way to take that might bring her out of the forest; exhausted by fatigue, as well as faint from the loss of blood, she was at length unable to proceed any further, and on gaining a part of the forest where the underwood was less thick, she seated herself on the trunk of a fallen tree, and burst into tears. All her fortitude seemed now to desert her, and she appeared to have escaped from Montaldi, only to endure a death still more horrible in the woods, from which she saw no possibility of extricating herself without a guide.

While occupied by these melancholy thoughts, the increasing dawn rendered the objects around her distinctly visible, when the loud blast of a bugle suddenly broke upon her ear, and several horsemen appeared from an adjoining thicket. Supposing them to be sent in search of her by Montaldi, Valoria sprung from her seat, and regardless of their calls to her to stop, fled from them with the swiftness of an arrow. The men, however, pursued her flying footsteps, and overcome by fatigue and terror, she at length sunk senseless upon the turf. One of the horsemen now alighted, and approaching our heroine, raised her from the ground, and supported her to the spot where his companions were waiting.

“By Jove! Guelpho,” he exclaimed to one of them: “here is a prize, to console us for our bad luck last night; I warrant this will make our peace with

Alfiero, and bring us a good recompence besides."

"I'faith, man!" replied his comrade; "she has as goodly an outside as one could wish to see; and if our Captain does not think her worth having, I'll answer for it there are others among us who are less fastidious."

"What palavering about a girl," exclaimed another, who till then had been a silent spectator of what had passed; do you mean to stand here prating all day? It is already light, and our Captain will be wondering at our delay; if you choose to bring her along with you, be quick about it, or I shall set off without you."

The man who had seized Valoria, now placed her before him on horseback, and the whole party gallopped off into the

thickest of the forest. The motion of the steed soon brought our poor heroine to her senses, when considering her destiny as inevitable, she made no resistance, but remained silent and motionless on the horse, her eyes fixed upon the ground, and unable, from her recent faintness, to raise her head from her conductor's shoulder. After travelling for the space of half an hour, they approached a cavern, almost hid from observation by the thick foliage that surrounded it. An iron door secured the entrance, at which one of the men knocked loudly for admittance, and at the same time blew a blast on his bugle. It was instantly opened by a man habited in the same manner as those who accompanied Valoria, and who, on beholding his comrades, exclaimed :

“ Why, where the devil, Guelpho, have you been, that you have not returned before. Our Captain has been come back

these two hours, and had begun to feel very uneasy at your unusual absence."

A suspicion of the truth now flashed across Valoria's mind, and though she was released from the apprehension of Montaldi, her terrors were no less poignant at the idea of falling into the hands of a lawless banditti. Long, however, she was not left to indulge in the horrible contemplation her situation inspired, for one of her conductors now seized her arm, and led her up a long passage, terminated by a door, which being unclosed, they entered a large apartment, or rather cavern, formed by nature in the solid rock, and lighted by a number of torches, placed against the walls. At an immense table in the midst were seated a group of men, at their morning repast; others were dispersed in different parts of the cavern, some employed in cleaning their arms, and the rest conversing together, or extended upon the floor asleep.

On the entrance of Valoria and her companions, several of the party at the table turned round, and exclaimed, with one voice ; " Well, my lads, what cheer last night ? "

" Cursed ill luck, Brunello," returned he who was foremost ; " not a single ducat. Methinks our travellers are possessed, and so stay at home, for the devil a one did we meet to-night. However, we are not returned empty-handed ; here's a woman found in the forest, so as she was alone, I made bold to claim her as legal property ; but as our Captain is the head of us, he must have the first choice of her."

" Ah, Alfiero is a lucky fellow," exclaimed one of the gang ; " but come, Guelpho, let us see this prize of yours."

It is impossible for words to express the direful feelings of Valoria during this

conversation ; her heart tortured with agony, she clung to the door-case for support, when Guelpho, seizing her hand, led her forward into the midst of the assembly. Shrinking from their looks, and stunned by the expressions of admiration that burst from every side, she stood silent and pale, till some one from the other extremity of the room called out that the Captain was coming. A general silence immediately ensued, when she beheld a tall graceful figure enter from an adjoining apartment, and advance, with a majestic air, towards the spot where she stood. He was apparently about forty, and dressed in the same uniform as his men ; the only mark of distinction was a large plume of feathers in his hat, which was drawn down so as almost entirely to conceal his countenance ; but the elegance of his form, the grandeur of every movement, was sufficient to have distinguished him in the

midst of thousands. As he approached, Guelpho advanced to meet him, and after conversing with him for a few moments, beckoned to Valoria to come forward. The man who stood beside her immediately led her into the presence of the Chief, who, partly raising his hat, gazed steadfastly upon her. Suddenly his countenance changed to a deadly paleness ; a universal trembling seized him ; and he folded his hands over his eyes, as if to shut out the sight of an object that he could not behold without extreme emotion. A pause of some moments ensued, when he removed them, and again earnestly surveyed Valoria, as he exclaimed :

“ Do I dream ? or has some phantom assumed that form, to awaken the torturing pangs of memory in my mind ? Oh, it is her look, her every feature, such as Antonia was, when her ruthless destiny tore her from me ! ”

His voice faltered from excessive emotion ; and Valoria, who regarded these marks of feeling as a favourable omen for her, now flung herself at his feet, as she faintly articulated :—" Ah, Signor, you see before you no airy inhabitant of another world—but an unhappy, defenceless woman, who at your feet implores from you mercy and protection !"

" Her voice, too !" exclaimed the Chief, in still greater agitation. " Mysterious resemblance ! wherefore were you thus sent to torture me ?"

Hastily turning from our heroine, he now paced the cavern with hurried and unequal steps, apparently buried in profound meditation. Having in some degree regained his composure, he again approached Valoria, and perceiving the blood upon her robe, he exclaimed with tenderness : " Good God ! what is the

meaning of this ?—She has been wounded !”—Then suddenly changing his tone of softness to that of authority and indignation, he turned to the man who had brought her, and sternly demanded whether they had done it ?—“ Oh no, indeed !” returned Valoria, with quickness, “ it was given me by the wretch from whom I fled into the forest where they found me.”

“ Summon Rosmondo immediately,” cried the Captain, as taking her hand he gazed with an expression of mingled tenderness and pity on her wan and lovely countenance.

Valoria raised her eyes, swimming in tears, to his face, as she exclaimed: “ Ah, Signor, will you indeed protect me ?”—“ Yes, with my life,” replied Alfiro, fervently; “ were I even bad, as my situation might lead you to imagine me, that face, that voice, would be your security from

every danger.—Though your destiny, Signora, has thrown you among a set of banditti, you shall find we are not destitute of honour—no evil shall befall you here; and you may consider yourself as safe beneath my protection as if you were with your own family.”

The Captain ceased speaking, and Valoria attempted to express her gratitude to him for this assurance of safety; when overcome by fatigue, terror, and the pain caused by her wound, she fainted away in his arms. Every remedy was anxiously applied for her recovery, and as soon as she revived, she was conveyed to an inner apartment, where her arm was examined, and dressed by Rosmondo, who pronounced it of little consequence; and after administering a composing medicine to her, desired she would immediately retire to bed. Valoria obeyed his injunction; and having offered her fervent

thanks to Heaven for her deliverance from the power of Montaldi, she soon fell into a tranquil and refreshing slumber.

It was past noon, when our heroine was awoke by a gentle tap at her door. As she had laid down in her clothes, she instantly arose, and on opening it, she saw a boy of about twelve years old, with a large box in his arms ; bowing low, he informed Valoria the Captain had sent it to her, as he imagined the contents might be useful ; requesting permission, at the same time, to visit her in half an hour, if it was not disagreeable. Valoria willingly gave her assent to this request, and as soon as the boy had retired, proceeded to examine the box, which contained a number of articles of female apparel, of different fashions, some of which appeared, from their make, to have been there a considerable time. To our heroine they were a valuable acquisition,

for her own clothes had been torn to pieces in her progress through the forest, and she now selected a white robe, to which was added a long veil of black lace.

Scarcely had she finished her toilet, when the Captain entered her apartment. His hat was now thrown off, and admitted a full view of his countenance, which, ~~one~~ excepted, Valoria thought the most handsome she had ever beheld. A noble ingenuousness sat on his open brow, and a smile of almost female beauty played round his lips, as he approached her: the moment, however, his fine dark eyes encountered the glance of hers, the expression of his face suddenly changed to one so sad, so indicative of mental misery, that Valoria could with difficulty restrain from tears, so much was her sympathy excited by his apparent distress. "Forgive my rudeness, Signora," he at length exclaimed: "but indeed the resemblance

you bear to a dear and most unfortunate friend, is so striking, that I forget, in the emotion it causes, the impropriety of which I am guilty."

Valoria assured the Captain that no apology was necessary; and after a short conversation on indifferent subjects, Alfiero delicately expressed a wish to be acquainted with the accident that had introduced her to the observation of his men. The gentleness of his manners had already inspired her with confidence, and well convinced of the necessity of making him her friend, she now revealed to him her whole history, to which Alfiero listened with a degree of emotion that could not fail of exciting her highest astonishment. When she had concluded, he inquired in agitation, "if she still possessed any thing that had been found with her, at the time she had been so mysteriously delivered to the care of the Conte d'Albano?"

“ I have only one at this present moment, Signor, she replied, “ which I always carry about me,” at the same time drawing the locket from her bosom, and putting it into his hands. Scarcely had he surveyed it, when he grew pale, staggered, and would have fallen to the ground had not Valoria placed a chair behind him, into which he sunk apparently lifeless.—With a look of the sweetest compassion his gentle companion stood beside him, as she bathed his temples with *sal volatile* ; in a few moments he revived, and grasping the hands of Valoria, gazed on her with passionate tenderness, as he exclaimed in a faltering voice : “ Oh yes, it must be so !—that perfect resemblance could not be the effect of chance.—Antonia, dear Antonia : the earth yet contains one relic of thy worth and loveliness !”

Valoria’s heart palpitated violently, as

the Captain pronounced these words, and unable to controul her emotions, she wildly articulated : " Oh, Signor ! what is the meaning of all this ?—If you know aught of my family or parents, for the love of Heaven do not conceal it from me !"

Valoria's words, and the manner in which they were pronounced, seemed to recall the scattered senses of Alfiero ; who, starting from his seat, traversed the room for some moments with unequal steps ; when making a violent effort to appear composed, he again approached Valoria, and gently took her hand, as he said :—" Pardon, sweetest Signora, the wildness of my behaviour ; but, in truth, the recollections that every view of your countenance recall are so agonizing, they not only unman, but almost render me beside myself."

"Ah! then, Signor," she sweetly replied, "since the sight of my face distresses you so much, I will always go with it veiled, rather than give pain to my protector."

"There spoke Antonia's self," frantically exclaimed the Captain; "just so sweet, so tender, were her accents when she addressed the wretched.—Enchanting Valoria! not less in mind than person, do you resemble my——Ah, tender affecting tie! why does my ruthless destiny forbid me to disclose ye!"

He paused; tears fell from his eyes; and, to conceal his emotion, he precipitately rushed from the room, leaving Valoria in a state of indescribable astonishment at the strangeness of his manners. In the evening she received a request to sup with him, and was accordingly conducted to a small apartment beyond the

hall or cavern, neatly fitted up as a sitting-room, and appropriated entirely to the use of Alfiero, who received his fair guest with equal respect and kindness. His deportment was now quite composed, and his speech rational and connected ; yet he was frequently absent, and in these intervals of thought would gaze upon our heroine with a peculiar expression, that at once excited her surprise and curiosity. In the course of conversation, Valoria mentioned the name of Montaldi ; when the Captain informed her, that he had for some time been connected with the band, who very frequently assembled at his castle. Perceiving her turn pale, he continued : “ Do not let this information, Signora, alarm you ; since for the wealth of worlds, I would not deliver you again into his power. I here pledge my honour to restore you safely to your friends ; but my situation, and the security of those who

depend upon me, require, that I should act with caution; and I trust that, while necessity compels you to remain with us, you will not find your residence very uncomfortable. I have books and other means of amusement, and I may say with sincerity, that every attention shall be paid to beguile the tediousness of this unavoidable delay."

Valoria gratefully expressed her thanks to Alfiero for his kindness, when one of the band came to inform him that they were ready to set out, and only waited for him. The Captain immediately arose, and taking Valoria's hand, conducted her to the door of her chamber, where he respectfully bade her good night, and retired. Our heroine sighed involuntarily as he shut the door, from the idea that a man so favoured by nature with insinuating manners and address, and who had shewed himself possessed of a heart

fraught with even uncommon sensibility, should be degraded from the station he seemed formed to fill in society, into that of a Chief of Banditti, and a thousand times she asked herself, what strange destiny had led him to such a situation. His behaviour to herself, so different from what she had expected to have met with, and his violent emotions had excited her curiosity in the highest degree, to be acquainted with the cause; a curiosity, however, she had but little hopes of having gratified. These thoughts occupied Valoria's mind the greatest part of the night, and it was not till after the return of the banditti that she lost the recollection of them in slumber. Our heroine soon experienced in her present abode many comforts she had never expected to meet with. Alfiero possessed a library of the most celebrated and valuable works by the best authors, not only in the Italian, but French and Eng-

lish languages, and the remarks and annotations written in most of them by himself, convinced her at once of the taste and science that had dictated them. To these were added a portfolio of exquisitely finished drawings, and every implement for the pursuit of an art, which he assured her he was passionately attached to, and frequently practised in his leisure hours. Music likewise Alfiero was a perfect master of, and played on the hautboy, his favourite instrument, with equal taste and judgment. The more Valoria became acquainted with the accomplishments of the Captain, the more did her astonishment increase at his present situation: but the agonies he suffered when she one day incautiously expressed her wonder at his acquirements, shocked her so much, that she never again ventured to make a remark of that nature. The deep depression that frequently overcame him, and a degree of

melancholy at all times visible in his countenance and manners, fully convinced her that he had been the victim of heavy misfortunes, a conviction that served still further to strengthen the unaccountable interest she had felt for Alfiero, from the first moment she beheld him; and most fervently did she wish, that a possibility might yet exist of snatching him from his present disgraceful situation, and restoring him to that in society he seemed formed by nature to fill and adorn.

CHAPTER X.

—— With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave. Thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose ; nor
The azur'd hair-bell, like thy veins ; no nor
The leaf of eglantine, which, not to slander it,
Out-sweetened not thy breath.

SHAKESPEARE.

SOME days were passed by Valoria in her new abode, during which her esteem for her generous protector continually increased. His behaviour towards her was expressive of almost parental tenderness ; and by every possible means he sought to promote her comfort and amusement. Our heroine's grateful heart was truly sensible of this kindness and attention from Alfiero ; her anxiety, however, to

be restored to her friends was not diminished; and she frequently urged him on the subject of his former promise.

The Captain at first endeavoured to calm her uneasiness, by his assurances of honour and protection; but finding this of no avail, he sought, whenever she mentioned it, either to evade the subject, or change the conversation. This conduct, though united to the most profound respect and tenderness, gave rise to much inquietude in the mind of Valoria; and, added to the want of air and exercise, contributed to chase the rose of health from her cheek, and render her pale, languid, and spiritless. Alfiero beheld with pain and alarm this change in her appearance, and by the advice of Rosmondo, determined to walk with her every day in the forest. The fresh breezes, and the cheering sight of nature, gradually revived Valoria's bloom, and dispelled the lan-

gour which had oppressed her, while it augmented her ardent desire to return to the Contessa; and one day when she was alone with Alfiero, she urged him so closely on the subject, that unable to evade it, he inquired, in a melancholy tone, "If he had been so unfortunate as to offend her, that she so anxiously desired to leave him?"

"Offend me! Signor," returned Valoria—"oh, surely no; my heart will always retain a grateful sense of your goodness to me; yet you cannot wonder at my wishes to return to those friends who love me so well, and who, I doubt not, suffer great unhappiness on my account.—Ah!" she continued, timidly, "if you, Signor, would quit this shocking abode, and go with me to Tuscany, my dear adopted mother would, I am sure, receive with delight the protector of her persecuted Valoria, and we might

then be all together without any fear of a separation."

"Sweet angel!" exclaimed the Captain wildly: "To leave this infernal abode, and live under the same roof with thee! would it were possible!—but, ah! the detested oath that binds me, condemns me to everlasting misery,—Valoria, Valoria," he added, frantically grasping her hands, "if you would not drive me to madness, mention not that subject again!"—Darting from her he now paced the apartment in a state of dreadful agitation, uttering imprecations against some one, whose name he pronounced in too low a tone for Valoria to distinguish it. Terrified, however, at his violence, and shocked at his emotions, she did not again venture to renew the subject that had given rise to them; secretly determined, however, if Alfiero did not soon take some measures for her departure, to

endeavour to effect her escape from the forest.

An opportunity soon presented itself of putting her design in execution. A slight indisposition confined the Captain for some days, and Valoria had no companion in her walks, except Alric, the boy who attended on him, and who he considered as the fittest person to trust her to. Resolved to take advantage of an accident that might not again occur, Valoria, on the second evening, complained of being fatigued, and seating herself on the grass, requested her companion to go and gather her some strawberries, while she rested herself, till his return. Eager to oblige her, Alric immediately complied ; and as soon as he was out of sight, Valoria took the first path that presented itself, nor once stopped her flying footsteps till she was far beyond the possibility of his overtaking her. The shades of night began to close around

a place so desolate, Valoria hesitated whether to retreat, or go forward, when the voice of some one engaged in prayer dispelled her apprehensions in regard to its being the haunt of banditti; and determined her to present herself before the unknown, and solicit shelter and refreshment for the night. As soon, therefore, as the voice ceased, she gently unclosed the door, and entered an apartment furnished like a hermit's cell, at the extremity of which was an old man kneeling before an altar. His dress was a long black gown, girded round his waist by a leathern belt, from which was suspended his rosary. As he slowly arose, he beheld Valoria, as she approached him, and with a deep groan, sunk senseless upon the ground.—Inexpressively shocked at the alarm she had so unintentionally given the holy man, our gentle heroine flew to him, and raising his head, held her salts to him, and bathed his temples with water. In a short time he revived,

and looking earnestly in Valoria's face, exclaimed : " Spirit of the injured Antonia, art thou come to reproach me with my crime !"

" I am no spirit, holy father," replied the astonished girl—" but a wandering unprotected female, whom chance conducted hither, in search of a shelter from the night air."

" It can be no delusion," cried the Recluse, as he took her hand ; " yet chance never yet produced a resemblance so perfect between strangers ; some nearer tie must surely exist to cause so uncommon a circumstance.—Tell me, fair maid," he added, " what is the name you bear ?"

" Valoria," returned our heroine, after a moment's hesitation. " Valoria !" he repeated with emotion : " what then is the appellation of your family ?"

"Alas!" replied his gentle companion, "I cannot tell you; since to this moment I am ignorant of it myself."

"Mysterious Heaven!"—exclaimed the Hermit, "what strange coincidence of circumstances!"—Inform me then, I conjure you, my daughter, by what occurrence you are thus unacquainted with your connexions.—Who reared your helpless infancy; and where has your life been passed till this moment?—Think not my question is prompted by idle curiosity. No; the motive that influences me is of importance, and your future destiny depends, perhaps, on your answer."

Surprized at the agitation and earnestness of the Recluse, Valoria related to him every circumstance of her being delivered into the care of the Conte d'Albano; and concluded by delivering to him the chain she wore round her neck.

After surveying it for a few moments, he fell upon his knees, as he exclaimed :

“ Merciful God ! I thank thee !— In preserving the child of a most injured mother, thou hast saved me from the commission of another direful crime ; and in leading her wandering steps to my abode, hast graciously ordained me to be the unworthy instrument to restore her to her long estranged rights.”

“ Holy father,” cried the agitated Valoria, “ what is the meaning of these words ?—Oh, if you know who were my parents, and wherefore I was thus abandoned by them, for the love of Heaven, I implore you to tell me !”

“ I did know them,” replied the Recluse ; “ and when, in your infancy, you were devoted to destruction, I snatched you from your impending fate, and com-

mitted you to Conte d'Albano, with a solemn charge, as he hoped for Heaven's salvation, to be faithful to the trust."

Valoria's emotions here became too powerful to be restrained ; and she would have sunk to the ground, had not the Hermit caught her ere she fell, and supported her to a couch, where he sprinkled her face with water, and gave her some to drink. In a few moments she recovered, and eagerly inquired of him the name of her family ?

" My daughter," returned the old man, " you must allow me two days before I can comply with your request ; when I pledge my word, not only to inform you who are your parents, but likewise to restore you to your noble father."—" But my mother !" exclaimed Valoria eagerly.

" Lady," returned the Hermit, " for-

give me; but I am not at liberty to answer any questions relating to your mother.—She exists no longer—but the earth contained not a more lovely, unfortunate, or injured being, than the Lady Antonia.”

“ Antonia!” exclaimed Valoria with emotion—“ Was her name, then, Antonia?”—“ It was,” he returned.—“ But wherefore does that name excite in you so much agitation?”

Valoria checked herself, and made a trifling excuse. Her emotion had been caused by the recollection of the banditti Captain; she did not think proper to communicate this circumstance to the old man, of whom she now inquired if he could let her have a bed, as she felt herself too much fatigued to keep up much longer.

"Yes," he replied, "there are several apartments among the ruins that have recently been occupied ; and if you will follow me, I will conduct you to one where you may sleep in security, and without fear of disturbance."

The Hermit now opened a door into a long passage, which led them to a flight of narrow winding stairs, terminated by an anti-chamber, large and destitute of furniture. Through this apartment was one much smaller, containing an old fashioned bed of green stuff, a table, and a few chairs. "You need not fear, my daughter," said her conductor, "to repose on this bed, as it was lately occupied by a friend of mine, and cannot therefore be damp." Then wishing her a good night, he lighted a tripod lamp that stood in the chamber, and departed.

As soon as the Recluse was gone,

Valoria retired to her couch ; long it was, however, ere sleep visited her eyelids, for her mind was in a state of tumult that was inimical to repose. Her heart palpitated with delight at the idea of receiving for the first time the embrace of a parent ; yet it was mingled with a something she knew not how to analyze, and which seemed in some measure to allay her joy. These emotions kept her waking the greatest part of the night, and the morning was far advanced when she descended from her chamber to Ignatio's cell, for so was the Recluse called, who respectfully saluted her, and placed before her a neat though simple repast. As soon as it was finished, he informed Valoria that business of importance, in which she was particularly concerned, required his immediate departure from the forest, where he intreated her to remain till his return, which would be, at the furthest, no longer than the

following evening. To this proposal Valoria could make no objection ; and after cautioning her not to venture beyond the outer gates, Ignatio set out on his journey.

As soon as he was gone, Valoria, to divert the time, wandered among the ruins, and from hence into a cemetery adjoining the chapel. Most of the tomb-stones were now broken down, and of the few that were yet standing, the inscriptions were effaced or illegible. Our heroine lingered in this repository of the dead, absorbed in the reflections naturally excited by the objects around her, till the increasing heat of the sun compelled her to seek a shelter from its rays. In returning to the chapel, by another path, her attention was attracted by a large lime tree, which grew on one side of the cemetery, beneath which was a grave, covered with the freshest turf.

No weed sprung up among the waving grass, and a rose tree planted at the head, now full of blossoms, partly overspread the mound, which seemed, from its appearance, to have been an object of particular attention to some one, who Valoria easily conjectured to be the Hermit. With an emotion she could not account for our heroine lingered near this spot, and when she quitted it, it was with a resolution to visit it every morning and evening, while she remained in the ruins.

On returning to her own room, she searched around it, in hopes of finding something that might afford her half an hour's amusement, and on opening a drawer in the table, she discovered a few books ; eagerly taking up one of them, a paper fell from it upon the floor, which Valoria, when she examined it, found to contain the following lines, written in a beautiful female hand.

SONNET.

The clouds disperse that shade the azure sky,
And hide the pale moon from my musing sight ;
Now soft her beauties break upon my eye,
And gild the mountain's brow with silvery light.
Pensive I sit, and watch the quivering beams,
As light they wanton 'midst the waving bough,
Or list the evening breeze, that murmuring seems
To my sad heart to utter tales of woe.
The village throng repose in peaceful sleep ;
But, ah ! the balmy power my pillow flies :
Amidst the midnight gloom unseen I weep,
And these lone walls re-echo back my sighs.
Ah ! may I soon, these days of sorrow past,
Find sweet oblivion in the tomb at last.

A. V.

Tears of tenderness fell from Valoria's eyes for the unhappy author of these lines ; and from the initials affixed to them, which were the same as on her own locket, she could not help thinking it was her mother. The same letters were written likewise in the margin of the books ; and our heroine, who regarded

them as sacred relics of her departed parent, determined to carry them with her when she left the ruins.

Nothing occurred to disturb Valoria's solitude for two days; till, on the evening of the second, as she was walking in the cemetery, she heard a voice calling loudly on her name. Somewhat alarmed, Valoria hesitated at first in replying, when the appearance of Ignatio coming from the chapel, dispelled her apprehensions, and she immediately advanced to meet him.

After the first salutations were over—"Signora," said the old man, "it is now necessary to inform you of the purport of my journey. I have been to the castle de Verezzi, to acquaint the Duca, your father, of the circumstances of your restoration to your family; and his Lordship has sent the Signor Fernando, his

brother, to convey you immediately to him, and he is now waiting in my apartment, in the utmost anxiety to behold you."

Without giving her time to reply, he seized the hand of the trembling, agitated girl, and led her into his cell, where she beheld a gentleman in the Venetian habit, of about eight or nine and thirty. His figure was manly and well formed, and his countenance not unpleasing, though not marked by any striking features. At the entrance of Valoria he turned pale, and appeared much agitated; but soon recovering himself, he sprung forward, and drawing her towards him, imprinted a kiss on her blushing cheek, as he exclaimed: "My happy destiny, Lady Valoria, has permitted me to be the first of your family to behold and acknowledge you. Accept, therefore, my lovely niece, my most fervent congratulations on your

unlooked-for restoration to your friends; a restoration that will, I trust, be a source of equal happiness to yourself and them."

"But my father," exclaimed Valoria.
"Oh, when shall I see my father!"

"As soon as possible," returned Verezzi; "since to-morrow morning I propose setting out with you on our journey to Venice; and in about two days am in hopes of reaching your father's residence. The Duca would himself have had the pleasure of conducting you there, had not indispensable business required his presence at home."

Valoria sighed, she knew not wherefore, and a pause in the conversation ensued, which was interrupted by Verezzi expressing a desire for supper; adding "that as he intended to set out at dawn of day, it was necessary to retire early."

As soon, therefore, as the repast was over, the party separated ; but on reaching her own chamber, an unaccountable desire to behold again the grave that had so much interested her, determined Valoria, as she might not have leisure in the morning to visit it then. Cautiously, therefore, she descended the staircase, and a door in the passage admitting her into the cemetery, she proceeded towards the lime tree ; when, to her surprize, she beheld Ignatio kneeling by the mound, his arms folded over his breast, and his eyes bent on the turf. So absorbed was he in meditation, that he perceived not Valoria's approach till she stood before him ; when, uttering a cry of horror and alarm, he started up, and was hastily leaving the place ; but our heroine followed him, as in soft and soothing accents she conjured him not to be terrified, for it was nobody but her.

"Good Heavens!" Lady Valoria," exclaimed Ignatio when he was sufficiently recovered from his agitation to speak : " what brings you here at this unseasonable hour ?"

" I came," she replied, " to visit once again that spot, which has unusually interested me. If the question is not improper, I would ask who sleeps beneath the grave before me ?"

" A martyred angel !" returned the Hermit with emotion. " Her name I cannot disclose ; but those roses yonder were not more sweet or beautiful than her, over whose remains they are planted. As some reparation for the share I had in accelerating her destiny, every night I offer up my petitions for forgiveness at her grave ; and every morning and evening I water the turf that overspreads it."

Much affected, Valoria bent with reverence over the grave, and gathering a branch of the rose-tree, kissed and placed it in her bosom. The Recluse now gently took her hand to raise her from the ground, and led her across the cemetery to the entrance of the chapel, where she paused a moment, as she addressed him.—
“ Permit me now, my good father, since I may not have another opportunity to thank you for the part you have taken in restoring me to my family ; and be assured, if it should ever be in my power to be of service to you, you shall not find Valoria ungrateful.”

“ Alas ! Lady,” returned Ignatio, “ you owe me nothing ; and were you acquainted with my real history, you would shrink from me with horror. Good night, my child,” he continued, “ enjoy sweet repose. You may sleep in peace, for you are innocent.”

The Hermit disappeared as he finished speaking, and Valoria returned to her chamber, where she slept undisturbed for the rest of the night. At the first dawn of day the inhabitants of the ruined monastery left their beds, and after a hasty breakfast, Valoria, and her new found uncle, got into the carriage which was to convey them to the castle de Verezzi. During their journey Fernando sought, by every means, to amuse his gentle companion; but though her heart was grateful for these expressions of tenderness, she felt it impossible to bestow on him her confidence and affection. Often did she accuse herself of injustice, in feeling a prejudice against one she was so slightly acquainted with, but it was in vain; her mind refused to assimilate with his; and the warm, affectionate heart of Valoria, for the first time in her life, refused a return to kindness.

Every attempt of our heroine to obtain any information of her family occurrences, from Verezzi, was ineffectual; all her questions on this head he sedulously evaded, while he dwelt continually on its wealth, its consequence, and the splendor and distinction that awaited her. Of her father he said but little, except that he was the first nobleman in the Venetian states; and was no less distinguished by his generosity, than by his rank and fortune.

Such was the information our heroine received from Verezzi, who minutely inquired after every particular of her early years, and the manner in which her life had hitherto been passed. On those points connected with the situation in which she had been found by the Hermit, Valoria answered explicitly, and without reserve; but in regard to every circumstance of her affection for Octa-

vian, she was silent, from a sentiment of timidity, which prevented her from unbosoming herself to one, who though a relation, was almost a stranger to her. No incident worthy of notice occurred during their journey ; and on the evening of the second day, the carriage turned from the road into an extensive and finely wooded park, along which they had for some time been travelling. Her companion now pointed out to Valoria the lofty turrets of a building which appeared behind the trees, as he exclaimed : “ There, Lady Valoria, is the castle Verrezzi : let me congratulate you on your first approach to the abode of your ancestors.”

Valoria answered by a smile, while her sweet eye swam in tears, and her heart throbbed with a thousand different sensations. A turn in the road now brought them in front of the house, and her at-

tention was somewhat diverted by her admiration at the grandeur and extent of the noble structure before her. The nearer, however, she approached the castle, the more violent her emotions became ; and pale and trembling she was lifted from the carriage by Verezzi, and supported into the hall, where having placed her on a seat, he ordered a servant in waiting to bring a glass of wine and water. As soon as Valoria had drank it, and was more composed, he took her hand, and conducted her across the hall to the library, where the servant informed him the Duca was.

At the extremity of the room, upon a sofa, was extended a tall, majestic looking man, between fifty and sixty years of age ; his features, though faded by the hand of time, had once been fine and expressive ; but a sullen gloom pervaded his countenance, and a sternness, almost

approaching to ferocity, lowered on his contracted brow. Notwithstanding his forbidding appearance. Valoria would have hastened to fling herself into his arms, but no expanded arms were opened to receive her, and she sunk at his feet, not more from reverence, than from an inability to support herself.

The Duca raised, and coldly embraced her, as he welcomed her arrival at the castle. Then seating her beside him on the sofa, he continued for some moments in earnest gaze on her face—Yet it was not the tender, ardent gaze of parental affection, it was expressive of doubt, suspicion, and regret.—“Well, my Lord,” exclaimed Verezzi, “are you deceived in regard to the likeness which you were informed Lady Valoria bore to the Duchessa her mother?”

“No,” returned the Duca; “it is

most wonderful ; she is the perfect image of what Antonia was, nineteen years ago." "There is not in her countenance a single feature that bears the smallest resemblance to your Lordship," remarked Verezzi, after a momentary silence.

The Duca started ; an expression of indignation crossed his face, as he exclaimed : " Ha !—you are right ; yet her hair and eyes are of the same colour as Rosalvo de St. Julian's."

" The Duchessa's were the same, my Lord, if you recollect."

" True, Fernando," replied his brother, " but Rosalvo had the most perfectly formed mouth I ever beheld; and this girl's is exactly like it. Yes—yes—it is indeed so !—deluded fool that I was ! and now I am going to present her to the world as ———"

"Forbear! forbear! my Lord, exclaimed Verezzi hastily, "remember your promise to me."

The Duca checked himself, and after a moment's silence, addressed several questions to Valoria, of the same nature as those before put to her by her uncle, to which she answered ingenuously; and expressed the warmest gratitude to the friends who had cherished and protected her.

"Well, Valoria," returned the Duca, when she ceased speaking, "we must think of some means of acknowledging the obligations you owe to your former friends. As you are probably fatigued after your journey, you will excuse my leaving you, as I am particularly engaged. My brother, however, shall perform the honours of the house to you, and you have only to express your wishes, as my

servants have orders to obey your commands." The Duca now quitted the room, as he motioned to Verezzi to follow him; who in passing Valoria, requested her to remain in the library till his return.

As soon as she was alone, our heroine, no longer able to controul her feelings, burst into an agony of tears. The reception she had experienced from the Duca, had fallen upon her heart like a death blow to her hopes. It was true, she had found a parent, but how had she found him? Cold, ceremonious, and destitute of the slightest appearance of affection. Her tears flowed more copiously at the recollection, when she asked herself if the Duca was indeed blameable in not feeling any great warmth of tenderness for one who, though his daughter, was an entire stranger to him? On herself only it depended, by her filial affection and atten-

tions, to awaken in his heart a sentiment of pure and genuine love for her. Consoled by this hope, she now wiped away her tears, when Verezzi entered to inform her that supper was waiting, and taking her hand led her to the eating room, where an elegant repast was served up in a style of splendour she had never before witnessed.

The Duca did not make his appearance, and as soon as the cloth was removed, Valoria expressing a wish to retire, a servant was summoned, who conducted her to the door of her chamber, and retired to call the domestic appointed by the Duca to attend upon his daughter.

Our heroine now entered an extensive apartment, furnished with the most superb luxury. The lofty walls were hung with pale blue damask, surmounted by a gilded cornice, and fringed and spotted

with gold. The chairs, sofas, and window curtains were the same, and the bed was placed beneath a canopy of blue sattin, the hangings festooned with gold, and apparently drawn back by Cupids painted upon them. Two tables of white marble stood between the four windows, under mirrors that descended from the ceiling, and carpets of Persia covered the floor. Scarcely had our heroine surveyed the magnificence that surrounded her, when the door of the apartment was opened, and an old woman, who might have personified neatness herself, entered. At the sight of Valoria, she stopped, and clasping her hands together, exclaimed: "Surely I dream, or the Lady Antonia has come from her grave, and now stands before me!"—Then suddenly approaching Valoria, she flung her arms around her, and covered her with kisses. Recalled at length to a sense of her situation, she released her

from her embrace, and a blush passed over her venerable cheek.

"Pardon, sweet Signora," she cried, "the liberty I have taken, but in truth, when I beheld you, the eighteen last years of my life were forgotten, and methought my own dear lady had returned again, looking just as she did on the fatal day she quitted the castle, never to see it more."

"No apology is necessary, my good mother," returned Valoria tenderly. "Believe me, it gives me real pleasure to feel that my arrival here is welcome to you."

"Welcome!" exclaimed Bertha with emotion. "Oh, surely it was ordained by Heaven to bless the remainder of my life. For never did I hope to behold again a child of my sweet lady's, since my

eyes saw her eldest boy committed to the tomb."

"I had a brother, then," replied Valoria, in an accent of sensibility.—"He died about three years ago, my lady, of a fever," said Bertha. "To be sure I thought his Grace the Duca would have broken his heart, for he doated on Signor Hypolito, who was the counterpart of himself, and not the least like his mother—but now he has found another child, when he did not suppose he had one, I hope he will forget his loss, and love you as well as he did my lord your brother."

Valoria dared scarcely indulge such an expectation, when she recollected the manners of her father towards her; she did not, however, think proper to express her sentiments on that subject to Bertha, who now told her that if she wished to

see a portrait of the Duchessa, there was one hanging in an adjoining room, at the same time opening the door. Valoria eagerly sprung forward, and entered a boudoir fitted up in the same style as the bed-chamber. Over the chimney-piece was a full length picture of a young and beautiful woman, habited in white, and her brows bound with a wreath of roses; her posture was melancholy, and an air of the deepest sadness was visible in her countenance.

“Holy Virgin!” cried Bertha, as she alternately surveyed Valoria and the portrait; “was ever any thing so much alike? Why, Signora, if it was not for that look of dejection in my Lady’s face, one might be sworn it was drawn for you.”

“Surely,” exclaimed Valoria, gazing with tenderness on the pensive interesting form of the Duchessa, “surely my mother

must have been very unfortunate, to have looked thus unhappy."—"Ah me! I fear so," returned Bertha, sighing.

"Are you not certain of it, then?" inquired our heroine, anxiously.—"Not perfectly so," replied the old woman, "for my Lady never made any complaints to me. A young Lady who resided here with her, named Theodora, was the only person in her confidence who knew any thing of her former life. As to what occurred while she was at the castle, I dare say Signor Verezzi has told you all about it."—"Not a word," returned Valoria: "he never would answer any of the questions I so earnestly put to him, concerning either of my parents."

"It is a long story, Signora," said Bertha, "and it is too late to begin it to-night; but to-morrow evening, if you please, I will relate to you every cir-

cumstance that I know about my Lady, for I think no one has so great a right to be acquainted with them as her own child."

Much as Valoria's curiosity was excited, she would not deprive the old woman of her rest, in order to gratify it, and accordingly retired to bed, where after musing for some time on the incidents of this eventful day, she fell into a profound slumber. As the Duca always breakfasted alone with his brother, Valoria took her coffee the next morning in her own dressing-room, and amused herself till dinner in rambling over the house and grounds, accompanied by Verezzi. At table she again met the Duca, and several gentlemen, to whom she was introduced as his daughter.

The manners of the Duca, stern and reserved, were but little calculated to inspire confidence in the breast of the timid

girl, who, as soon as the repast was finished, retired to her own apartment, where she devoted the afternoon to writing to the Contessa Reveldi, a long account of the incidents that had befallen her since their separation. In the evening Bertha came according to her promise, and being seated by Valoria in her dressing-room, she began her eagerly anticipated narrative, as follows :

“ It is now twenty years, Lady Valoria, since your mother first came to the Castle de Verezzi, a few months after her marriage with my Lord ; she was at that time about eighteen, and as beautiful as you are now. Her manners were sweet and mild as an angel's, but a deep and heavy depression preyed on her spirits, which was, I fear, augmented by the harsh treatment of my Lord, though she bore all his unkindness without a complaint or murmur. Often and often have I

found her in tears, and when she saw me coming she would smile so sweetly, and endeavour so to conceal her sorrow, that my heart has secretly bled for her. I soon discovered that my Lady Antonia did not love her husband, but had been compelled to marry him by her father. I believe, too, that she was attached to some one else, as I have frequently seen her gazing on two pictures which she had in her cabinet, where they are to this day, for they were brought back by Signor Fernando."

Valoria eagerly inquired if she could see them, and Bertha brought her a small ivory cabinet, which she unlocked, and took from it the miniature portraits of two gentlemen, in one of which our heroine recognized a perfect resemblance of Alfiero. The other was a most elegant and handsome young man of about two or three and twenty, whose blue eyes sparkled with sensibility, and whose open

forehead was lightly shaded by the ringlets of his nut-brown hair; at the back of the picture was a braid of the same colour, and the initials H. M. in small pearls.—Valoria, earnestly gazing on the miniature, desired Bertha to proceed in her narrative, which she immediately did.

“The sweetness of my Lady’s manners, her goodness and benevolence, endeared her to every domestic in the family, who highly resented the behaviour of the Duca towards her; and it was whispered about, that it was in a great measure owing to his attachment to Signora Theodora, a young lady the Duchessa had been brought up with, and who she loved as tenderly as if she had been her sister.”—“And do you think there was any truth in this report?” inquired Valoria.

“Heaven alone knows! my Lady, if there was then,” replied Bertha; “but

certain it is, that after the Duchessa's death she lived with my Lord, as his mistress, for some years—but to proceed.—Lady Antonia at length brought my Lord a son; and we all hoped, as he had been so anxious for an heir to his estate, that he would now have more affection for the Duchessa; but, alas! we were disappointed, though never sure was there a mother more fond of her offspring than my Lady, or one who paid more attention to them.”

“ When Signor Hypolito was about a year old, a young gentleman came to the Castle, named St. Julian; his father was an officer, whose death had flung his son upon the world, destitute of friends and fortune. Thus situated, he applied to my Lord, (who, to do him justice, was always liberal and generous,) for his patronage and recommendation, nor was he disappointed; for the Duca heard so favour-

able an account of his character and abilities, from several persons of distinction to whom he was referred by St. Julian, that he received him into his family as his private secretary. The Signor St. Julian was very handsome, and amiable in his manners, and soon became a favourite of every one in the house: my Lady herself always behaved towards him with the most perfect politeness; but Heaven is my witness, I never beheld any lightness in her carriage to him or any one else; yet, certain it is, the Duchessa secretly quitted the Castle, in company with him and Theodora."—Valoria changed colour, and leaning her arm on the table, covered her face with her hands.

"The last time I ever saw my Lady," continued Bertha, "was on the evening before her departure, when I came as usual to undress her. She was in her dressing-room, and had just begun to

play the evening service to the Virgin on her harp. Never had I heard her voice sound so sweet, yet so plaintive, as it did that night; and I stood and listened to her till the tears streamed down my cheeks. When she came into the room, I perceived she had been weeping, and her look was so mournful, yet so sweet, that I could have fallen on my knees and worshipped her for a Saint, for such she appeared to be. When I asked her if she was ready to go to bed, she answered, 'that she was not inclined to sleep, and should perhaps sit and read for an hour or two; but,' added she, 'I do not wish, my good Bertha, to keep you from your repose, and when Theodora comes you may leave me.' While I waited for her, my Lady opened her cabinet and took out of it a valuable ring, which she gave me, and desired me to keep it always for her sake. I promised her I would, and often, very often, I weep over it to this day.

"I know not how it was, Signora, but I felt a strange kind of reluctance to quit the Duchessa that night; and when I left the room, after Signora Theodora came in, it seemed to me as if I had beheld her beautiful face for the last time, and so indeed it proved. The next morning my Lady was gone, accompanied by St. Julian and Theodora. It was soon propagated about the Castle by Signor Verezzi, that she had fled from her husband on account of an intrigue with St. Julian; but so virtuous, so irreproachable had been her conduct, that the report was credited but by a few, and those few were in a situation too menial to be able to judge much about it."

"But you, Bertha," exclaimed our agitated heroine, "answer me without equivocation, whether you really believe it was true?"—"As I hope for salvation I do not," she replied: "the Duchessa

was too good, too much like an angel ever to be capable of such a crime ; and I would venture my life, that whatever was the motive of her departure, were it fully known, it would be found to be such as will reflect no dishonour on her name."

" Oh, I must, I will believe it," exclaimed Valoria, " for it would break my heart even to think my mother could be culpable !—But tell me, Bertha, what said the Duca at her departure ?"—" But very little, my Lady ; he only sent Signor Verezzi in search of her. Where, or how she was found, I never could find out ; but after being absent a month, they all returned, but Signor St. Julian, and brought my poor dear Lady with them a lifeless corpse, who, it was reported, had died in consequence of a premature delivery, and was immediately buried without any of her faithful domestics being permitted to see her.—By

some means Signora Theodora made her peace with my Lord ; she resided with him in the Castle for several years, as his acknowledged mistress, and was hated by every individual in the family, for her haughtiness, and the violence of her disposition, which was still more evident when contrasted with the condescension and sweetness of the departed Duchessa. At last, my Lord and Theodora quarrelled, and shortly after she left the Castle, and we have never heard of her since.

“ Nothing then occurred particularly till the death of Signor Hypolito, your brother, who was the darling of his father, and had been so spoiled by him, that he possessed the love of very few besides. After he had lost him, my Lord gave himself up to sorrow, when he was informed that my Lady had left a daughter, and we were shortly after ordered to prepare for your arrival ; and now you

are come, and in your person and manners are so like your angel mother, we may look forward to enjoy many days of happiness in your service ; and, old as I am, Lady Valoria, I hope I may not close my eyes till I have beheld your children and blessed them, as I have blessed my dear Lady Antonia's."

The venerable Bertha here concluded her narrative ; and Valoria, after affectionately thanking her, dismissed her to her repose, and retired to her own bed, where she passed the remainder of the night in reflection. Her mother's virtues, her sufferings, and the angelic patience with which she had borne them, called forth tears of mingled pity and admiration ; and so firmly rooted was her conviction of the Duchessa's innocence, that even the ambiguous circumstances which appeared to be connected with her history, were unable to shake it.

It is an acknowledged maxim, that titles and fortune do not always confer happiness on their possessor, and our heroine was doomed to experience the truth of this assertion; for, as the daughter of a powerful nobleman, and the heiress of immense wealth, she enjoyed fewer pleasures than when an unknown and destitute orphan. Surrounded by luxury and splendor, she sighed for that happiness which results from reciprocal affection, and the society of those we love. From the moment she had first been introduced to him, Valoria had been disposed to cherish the highest filial tenderness for her father; but the sentiments of her glowing heart had been early suppressed by the cold and frigid manners of the Duca, whose sternness inspired her with a sensation almost approaching to terror, and the few hours she passed in his society, were embittered by reserve on one side, and restraint on the other.

Verezzi, therefore, was her only companion, whose manners she disliked, and whose character, the more she became acquainted with it, the more she was convinced he could never obtain her love or esteem. Like Montaldi he was a libertine; but he did not, like him, possess the art of concealing his natural disposition under an insinuating exterior.

Verezzi's manners were bold, haughty, and overbearing, and his temper violent and ferocious, which he frequently expressed in a way that excited the alarm and disgust of the timid, gentle Valoria, who, condemned to society so uncongenial to her pure and delicate mind, found her only consolation in the company of the venerable Bertha, with whom she could converse without reserve of her mother, and weep over her sufferings and her untimely fate. Sad and heavily a month had passed on since her arrival at

the castle de Verezzi, and she began to feel very uneasy at the long silence of the Contessa de Reveldi, when one morning, as she was sitting in her own room, a letter was brought to her, directed in the hand writing of her friend. With trembling eagerness she tore it open, and read as follows :

“ I was from home, my beloved
“ Valoria, when your letter arrived which
“ has raised me from the deepest despair
“ to happiness inexpressible. I will not
“ now dwell, my child, on the sufferings
“ your sudden disappearance caused me,
“ since, when we meet, I shall be able to
“ give you a more lively idea of them
“ than I possibly can do by letter. Every
“ one who had known you, participated
“ in my grief; and poor d’Albini was
“ almost in a state of distraction. No
“ means were neglected that might lead
“ to a discovery of your abode, and an

“ order was procured to search the Castles d’ Albano and de Retirero, but in vain ; you were not in either of them, and we began to relinquish every hope of finding you, when the arrival of your letter terminated our suspense, and afforded us the most unexpected joy.

“ And here, my Valoria, let me pause, and admire the means by which a wonder-working Providence has brought about the discovery of your birth ; since had not Montaldi so basely torn you from your friends, it is probable you might never have known it. Accept my sincere congratulations on this happy event ; and believe me when I assure you, that Valoria de Verezzi will not be dearer to my heart than Valoria Valenti, when she had no other claim to my affections than her own sweetness and virtues. And now my dearest, you will excuse me of un-

“ kindness, if I should conclude this letter without mentioning a subject, of all others most interesting to you.
“ Well then, Valoria, I comply ; yet ere I begin, let me conjure you to call up all your fortitude to support the intelligence I have to communicate to you.
“ —Methinks I hear you reply to this :
“ ‘ I anticipate, my friend, what you would tell me.—Octavian is married’—
“ it is true, Valoria, but that is not all—
“ To amuse my mind after your departure, the Marchesa insisted on my coming to the villa Veroni, in order to be present at her son’s nuptials, hoping that the festivities of the time might serve to dissipate the grief that oppressed me for your loss. I accordingly accepted her invitation, and six weeks ago Octavian was united to the Lady Lucillia. On the morning of that eventful day, as I entered the drawing-room, I found Signor Veroni alone, and

“ leaning pensively with his head against
“ a window. Perceiving that he looked
“ unusually pale and dejected, I went up
“ to him, and earnestly inquired if he was
“ unwell? He took my hand, and press-
“ ing it to his lips, bowed over it to con-
“ ceal the tears that fell from his eyes.
“ —— ‘ Dear Octavian!’ I exclaimed,
“ ‘ wherefore are you thus affected?—
“ Alas! I fear your reluctance to this
“ approaching union is still unconquered.”

“ He sighed deeply as he replied, ‘ Par-
“ don my weakness, my dear friend; It
“ was excited by past recollections, and
“ will be only momentary. I see my mo-
“ ther and Lady Lucillia coming from
“ the garden, and will retire for a few
“ minutes to recover my composure.——
“ He immediately quitted the room, and
“ when he again joined the party at table,
“ he had regained his usual melancholy
“ serenity. About nine in the evening,
“ the whole family assembled in the cha-

“ pel to witness the performance of the
“ marriage ceremony. Octavian, sup-
“ ported by his father, was calm, and
“ though his colour varied every moment,
“ he struggled to subdue his feelings, and
“ assume an appearance of fortitude ; but
“ the conflict in his mind was too power-
“ ful for his frame to support, and scarcely
“ had the priest pronounced his final be-
“ nediction, when he fell back, fainting
“ in the arms of the Marchese. My poor
“ friend who drowned in tears had been
“ a silent spectator of his emotions, now
“ sprung forward, and kneeling by the
“ side of her son, supported his head on
“ her bosom, while his father and myself
“ anxiously exerted ourselves to recover
“ him. After some time he revived, and
“ raising himself from the Marchesa’s
“ arms, extended his hand to the Duca
“ d’Alcarmo, as he said smiling, ‘ I am
“ ashamed of this weakness, my kind
“ friends, but in reality my state of health

“ has been such, that I am unable to bear
“ the least emotion.’—With an air of
“ complacency he now returned the con-
“ gratulations of his relations, and ac-
“ companied his bride to receive and wel-
“ come the guests who had been invited
“ to the nuptials.

“ The gardens, which had been splen-
“ didly illuminated for the occasion, were
“ thrown open, and the company dis-
“ persed in different parts, amused them-
“ selves according to their various incli-
“ nations, till a summons to supper called
“ them into the house. Octavian, how-
“ ever, did not make his appearance dur-
“ ing the whole of the repast, to the great
“ displeasure of the Marchese, who highly
“ resented this slight offered to the Duca
“ and his daughter. Midnight came, and
“ he did not return.—A general search
“ was now made for him in the gardens
“ and pleasure-grounds, but he was no

“ where to be found.—The anger of the
“ Marchese was now changed to alarm ;
“ while the Marchesa, in the most ag-
“ nized terror, wandered about like one
“ deprived of sense, repeatedly calling on
“ the name of her son.—Every inquiry
“ was made among the domestics of their
“ having seen him, and one of them at
“ length declared, ‘ that he had observed
“ Signor Octavian go out of the lawn,
“ and take the path that led to the sea
“ shore.’ Several of the servants, and a
“ number of the guests immediately has-
“ tened to the beach, and after a long
“ search were returning, without having
“ seen any thing of him, when a gentle-
“ man perceived something floating on
“ the water.—In trembling expectation
“ they watched its progress to the shore,
“ when it was discovered to be the hat of
“ Octavian, which was easily recognized
“ by a plume of white feathers, looped
“ with diamonds in the front. One of the

“servants who had walked further on the
“beach, now returned with his handker-
“chief, which he had picked up, and it
“was but too evident, from every cir-
“cumstance, that the unfortunate youth,
“had plunged himself into the ocean in
“a paroxysm of despair.”

Valoria read no more—the chill of death crept over her whole frame, and she sunk senseless on the floor.—How long she might have remained in this state is uncertain, if a domestic, who had been sent to call her to dinner, had not entered the apartment, and found her extended there, apparently lifeless.—Her loud cries soon summoned assistance, and having laid our heroine on the bed, every means were used for her restoration, but without effect, and it was not till a surgeon had opened one of her veins, that she showed any symptoms of returning existence.—The shock she had received

was too much for a frame which had long been preyed upon by disappointment and sorrow; and she was seized with a violent fever, that for some time baffled the united skill of the best physicians that Italy afforded, to save her from death, that for many hours hovered over her. Youth, however, and an unimpaired constitution, at length overcame the virulence of her disease, and at the end of three weeks she was able to leave her room, but so changed, she appeared only like the shadow of her former self. The first use Valoria made of her returning convalescence, was to write to her maternal friend, and the Marchesa di Veroni, whom she implored in the most moving terms, to forgive her for being the innocent cause of her son's death; adding, that the only earthly happiness she now looked forward to, was to behold her once more, and to receive from her own lips an assurance of her pardon.

This duty performed, our heroine now endeavoured to summon all her fortitude to support with resignation her hapless destiny. No complaint, no murmur, fell from her lips, her sorrows were locked up in the inmost recesses of her soul, and in the presence of her father and Verezzi, she sought to appear tranquil, and

“ Faintly strove, by sickly smiles, to hide
“ The canker'd worm that prey'd upon her heart.”

In that heart the image of Octavian was cherished with enthusiastic fondness; and her sole pleasure was in her solitary moments to recall with scrupulous exactness every hour she had passed in his society, and dwell on every look, on every word, that were engraved upon her memory in indelible characters.

A month had passed, unmarked by any particular occurrence, since the fatal intelligence of Octavian's death had

reached our heroine; when one morning she received a message from the Duca, requesting her attendance in the library. Surprized at so uncommon a circumstance, Valoria obeyed, and with tremulous steps descended to the library, where she found her father alone, who motioned her to be seated, as he thus addressed her; "I sent for you, Lady Valoria," said her father, "to converse with you on a subject of importance, and request your most serious attention."

Valoria bowed in token of acquiescence, and the Duca continued: "By the death of my only son, your brother Hypolito, the titles and estates of Verezzi must pass to your uncle, Signor Fernando, on whom your person and manners have made a great impression, and whose desire it is, by a marriage with you, to preserve the name and fortune of our family undivided. As his proposals entirely coincide with

my own wishes, I have obtained a dispensation to enable him to put them in execution, and I here command you to consider the Signor de Verezzi as your future husband."

"Oh, my father!" cried Valoria, sinking at his feet: "By that sacred name, I conjure you not to seal the misery of your only child!"—

"What does this mean, Signora?" demanded the Duca sternly.—"It means, my Lord," returned Valoria, "that though I regard and honour the Signor Verezzi as your Lordship's brother, and my own uncle, yet I can never love him as a husband.—Oh, do not, then, by forcing me to marry him against my inclination, doom me to everlasting wretchedness!"

"Valoria," exclaimed the Duca, "when I consented to receive and ac-

knowledge you as my daughter, I expected to meet with the most explicit obedience from you. In consideration of your ignorance of this circumstance, I will overlook what has just passed, on condition that you do not again set up your own will in opposition to mine. It is my command that you accept Signor Verezzi for your husband, nor was there any necessity to consult you on the affair, since it is sufficient that I desire it. You may now retire, Lady Valoria, since you know my will, and know likewise what obedience is expected to it."

Valoria curtsied, and left the room without replying. Words cannot, however, convey an adequate idea of her emotions at this intelligence of the Duca's intentions in regard to her future establishment. Her heart had ever revolted from the idea of another succeeding Octavian in the possession of her affections,

and she had firmly resolved never to marry at all. What then were her feelings at the idea of becoming the wife of Verezzi; for whom she felt almost as great a dislike as she had done for Montaldi, and with whom a heart so pure, so virtuous as hers, could never hope to enjoy any thing that bore the most distant appearance of happiness! She plainly saw that her marriage with him had been concerted between Verezzi and her father, as a matter of aggrandizement to their family, in which she had no further concern, than as being the person by whom it was to be promoted, and her heart swelled with generous indignation at the narrow-minded policy that could have conceived such a design. "And shall I," she exclaimed, "shall I tacitly submit to vow to love and honour, where my heart feels no sentiment but disgust and contempt?—Yet how shall I oppose the wishes of my stern and inflexible fa-

ther—and when scarcely acquainted with the name of daughter, venture, by my disobedience, to incur his direct displeasure, perhaps his curse?”—She shuddered, and after some deliberation, resolved to throw herself on the generosity of Verezzi, by a candid disclosure of her sentiments in regard to a union with him, and implore him by every argument not to persist in a pursuit that would doom her to unspeakable wretchedness.

An opportunity presented itself to Valoria, of putting her design in execution, when Verezzi, sitting alone with her in the evening, introduced the subject, by inquiring “if the Duca had communicated his intentions to her concerning her future establishment?”

“He has, Signor,” returned Valoria; “and in your hands is placed the happiness of my future life.”

"It will be my constant study," he replied bowing, "to merit the invaluable trust reposed in me."

"You misunderstand me, Signor," said Valoria. "A moment on which depends my misery or happiness in this world, is not a fit one for compliments.—I will be ingenuous with you, and in so doing, I trust I shall not be deceived in my reliance on your generosity."

Verezzi assured her she might place the most unlimited confidence in it; and Valoria proceeded with firmness, yet with the utmost delicacy, to state her situation to him, expressing her gratitude for the honour he wished to confer upon her, and her regret that she did not entertain for him such sentiments as should always accompany a connexion of that nature, and which could alone induce her to bestow her hand on any man. "Thus

situated, Signor," she added, " I throw myself entirely on your generosity ; my fate depends on you.—By relinquishing the claim my father has given you, you can at once save me from what I tremble to anticipate, the necessity of disputing his commands, and the certainty of his displeasure. My wayward heart refuses you its love ; but by a conduct so noble and exalted as this, you will obtain an everlasting title to my gratitude."

" Fairest Valoria," returned Verezzi, when she ceased speaking, " the beauty of that lovely mouth pleads more strongly against your petition, than the eloquence that proceeds from it does for you, since that man must be surely an idiot, who could willingly relinquish the possession of such charms, when it is in his power to obtain them. And permit me to ask," he added, " from whence proceeds your reluctance to become my wife ?"

"Because, Signor," replied Valoria, "I have no heart to bestow; and thus circumstanced, I cannot, consistent with my principles, vow at the altar everlasting love, where I feel no such sentiment."

"Well, Lady Valoria," said Verezzi, "we will not dispute on this subject; you are welcome to bestow your heart on whom you choose, provided your charming person is mine!"—

"Despicable wretch!" cried Valoria, a glow of indignation mantling over her pale cheek,—“as void of delicacy as destitute of every generous feeling, that can seek by the authority of a stern parent to gain the reluctant maid to thy arms.—Be gone; and remember, if before you were the object of Valoria's indifference, she now feels for you the contempt and aversion your principles and conduct merit!"

Without waiting his reply, Valoria quitted the room, and hastened to her own chamber, leaving the haughty Verezzi overwhelmed with surprize at her rejection, and anger at the spirited manner in which she had expressed her sentiments to him. On gaining her chamber, the spirits her insulted delicacy and indignant feelings had given her, entirely forsook our heroine, and flinging herself into the first seat she came to, she burst into a violent flood of tears. Relieved by weeping, her composure returned, and she became sufficiently collected to reflect calmly on her situation. Her last hope had now failed her, and though she had not placed any very firm reliance on it, her anguish at its disappointment was not less acute. From the idea of marrying Verezzi her whole soul revolted in horror, yet by what means she could avoid it, without incurring the resentment of the stern Duca, from which her timidity

made her shrink. These reflections kept Valoria waking for some time, and when she at length fell into a slumber, the events of the preceding day still continued to operate on her sleeping fancy. —Her dreams presented to her a chapel, where, accompanied by her father, she was come to plight her vow to Verezzi. Already she imagined the solemn ceremony began, when, at the moment the priest had placed her hand in the intended bridegroom's, an airy form suddenly stood before them. Her veil thrown back discovered a countenance exquisitely lovely, but pale and wan, while her robes were spotted with the blood that flowed from a wound in her bosom. At the sight of the spectre, Valoria imagined Verezzi staggered and fell to the ground; when the soft and mournful accents of the awful visitor broke upon her ear, as it pronounced these words:—"Valoria, wed not thy mother's murderer!"—Then

folding her arm over her, as if in benediction, a thin cloud received and enveloped her from her sight.—In her efforts to pursue her Valoria awoke, and it was some time before she was able to persuade herself that the delusion of her imagination was not a reality. After some time she again fell asleep, when the same vision was once more presented to her view, and again the voice of the phantom sounded upon her ears.—Springing from the bed, our heroine gazed fearfully around the room, in expectation of beholding the figure, but nothing met her eye, save the moon-beams softly stealing through the windows. Flinging a dressing-gown over her, she opened one of the casements, where she remained for some time. The beauty of the scene before her calmed the agitation of her spirits; and, revived by the freshness of the breeze, Valoria was just proceeding to close the casement, when her attention was suddenly attracted

by the appearance of a figure gliding among the trees of the park, enveloped in a large cloak, and a slouched hat drawn close over his countenance. With slow and cautious steps he approached the castle, and when within a few paces of the tower in which was her chamber, suddenly paused, and continued for some time immoveable and earnestly gazing on the building. Fearful of being observed by this mysterious personage, Val6ria drew back; after remaining stationary for nearly an hour, she beheld him retrace the path by which he had come, and at length disappeared in a small wood at the extremity of the park. Having waited for some time to see if he returned, our heroine shut the window, and again got into bed, where she laid till morning, alternately reflecting on her dreams, and the mysterious stranger she had just seen. The former she could not help fancying had something in them more than com-

mon ; and though she had no proof that Verezzi had been in any way accessory to her mother's fate, yet her suspicions were excited, and firm now was her resolution never to become his wife, whatever evils she might incur by her refusal. Force might indeed drag her to the altar, but it cannot compel her to pronounce vows, from which her whole soul recoiled, while her fancy presented to her the horrid idea of their being plighted to her mother's murderer.

END OF VOL. II.

